

ARENA

LINDSAY and RANDALL SWINGLER

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ARENA

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Arena is a literary magazine interested in Values. This statement may not seem to differentiate it from other literary magazines; everything depends on the definition of Value. If one is a problematically-existent dog chasing its docked tail, in a search for the Value of Value and the Meaning of Meaning, there is certainly nothing that need upset anyone. Not much, except perhaps dizziness, will happen. The intellectual gap with which one begins will continue intervening at all moments when there is any danger of nearing the wholeness within which value becomes valuable and meaning meaningful. But our use of the term means *human value* and does not abstract value from activity, from the total human process and its formative or developmental modes.

In plain terms, this means that *Arena* neither seeks to label our culture as "decadent" nor to acclaim it as securely progressive. We believe that the culture of our world is rent by intense conflicts, and for that very reason is full of the most violent potentialities for good and evil, for integration and disintegration. We believe in particular that countries like France and England, which have well back in their past undergone successful bourgeois revolutions, have passed during the last hundred odd years through phases of culture which are of the utmost importance for the future. (The one flat period, in the visual arts, for instance, that can be simply labelled decadent or moribund in any final sense is that of 19th century academicism and naturalism, in which the tradition of the Renaissance is seen petering out, with the folk-roots cut away. But at once a series of counter movements, often sectional and limited, begins struggling to find the lines of renewal, the necessary breakings-down and the points of new organic integration).

The work in which *Arena* is interested is the sorting-out of these confused and often vital trends of resistance—the clarification of the valuably formative from the false and the merely fashionable (a feeble conformity trying to exploit what was for a moment a genuine adventure). This work includes a give-and-take between Marxism in its critical aspects and the free play of the creative elements in our culture; it aims at separating-out and strengthening all that genuinely reveals the artist's prophetic function, his capacity to reach ahead into various aspects of the integration that his world lacks but needs for its advance. And that means also showing how this function worked out in the past.

Christopher Caudwell posed with fine precision the issue at stake. The critical problem is to realize what "is the lie at the heart of contemporary culture, the lie which is killing it, and deeper still is found the truth which is the complement of the lie, the truth which will transform and revitalize culture."

Arena will draw on European sources—or still further afield—as well as on English; and intends to include in each issue a section covering *Polemics and Chronicle*. The present issue has English, French, Russian, Belgian, Hungarian, Australian, South African, Scottish, and United States contributors.

Edith Sitwell

STREET ACROBAT

*Upon the shore of noon, the wide azoic
shore of diamonds where no wave comes, sprawled the nation
Of Life's rejected, with the vegetation
Of wounds that Life has made*

Breaking from heart and veins. Why do they tend

*With pride this flora of a new world? To what end?
But wearing the slime of Lethe's river for a dress—
Peninsulars of Misery in the sea of Nothingness.*

*With waves of dead rags lapping islands of the shade,
They seem. With these for audience—
From whom you could not hope even for pence*

*To lay upon your eyes—
Street-corner Atlas, you support a world
Whose solar system lies in a slum room.
And what is the world you balance on your shoulder?
What fag-ends of ambition, wrecks of the heart, miasmas
From all Time's leprosy lie there? The diamonds of the heat*

*clothe you, the being diseased by civilization—
With a void within the soul that has attracted
The congestion or intoxication
Of Astral Light—a gulf of diamonds—
Gyrations, revolutions, vortices
Of blinding Light timed by the new pulsation,*

You work false miracles of anarchies
And new moralities
Designed for Bird-Men, grown with the growth of wings
From needs of Fear—
And balance high above an immeasurable abyss
Of blinding emptiness and azure vast profundities,

To the sound of ragged Madness beating his drum
Of Death in the heart, you, the Atavistic, the Ape-Man,
The World-Eater, call to Darkness, your last Mate
To come from her world, the phantom of yours. And, Strong Man,
shake
The pillars of this known world,—the Palace, and slum,

Or bear this breaking world—turn Acrobat,
And execute dizzy somersaults from Real
To the Ideal—swing from the desolate Heavens
Of angels who seem Pharisees and Tartuffes,
Januses, gulls, and money-lenders, medicines,
In those false heavens of cloud—down to a comfortable Hell—
Or swing this easy world and watch it heel
Over before it fall,

To the admiration of the Lost Men nursing their wounds
And the children old in the dog's scale of years,
—with only this sight for head . . . (O! seeing these,
I thought the eyes of Men
Held all the suns of the world for tears, and these are shed—
Are fallen and gone!
So dark are the inexpiable years).—

BUT I, whose heart broke down to the centre of its earth,
And spilled its fire and rubies garnets like the heat
And light from the heart of the rose

still lie immortal in the arms of Fire—
Amid the ruins . . . While the Acrobat on his tight-rope
 stretched between beast
And god, over a vast abyss

Advances,—then recedes. Or, on his ladder of false Light
Swings from mock Heavens to real Hell. And Galileo, blind,
stares with his empty eyes on the crowds of planets and of roses—
Beyond the arithmetician's

Counting! O, the grandeur of the instinct! The young people and
 young flowers
Who, careless, come out in green darkness
Are numberless as the true heavens still, in this world
We measure by means of the old mathematician's
Rods—or by rays of light—by the beat of Time—or the sound of
 the heart,
And vibrating Atoms that soon will be Man, or Flower!

Verse 12, line one . . . lie immortal in the arms of Fire,

SIR THOMAS BROWNE, *The Urn Burial*.

Verse 12, line 2 and 3—this is founded on a phrase from Nietzsche: *Thus spake Zarathustra*, only there it was 'Man and Superman'—not beast and God.

Jean Cassou

SONNETS COMPOSED IN SECRET

Dead to all fortune, dead to hope and space,
 but not to time whose harvest's still ahead,
I must draw back and let him take my place,
 but in my weakening a great passion's bred,
 and with it to a nameless land I've fled
where night and night oppress me and efface.

shadow eats shadow there. I lift my head
quick as the dreamwall drinks my every trace.
Not life nor void. When out from sleep I'm cast,
newly-dead children roam the no-man's way,
small lucid gleams that come and go in turns,
flights with no future, memories with no past,
waning is joy for them and death their play,
and in them, wings outstretching, Psyche burns.

Come, at chagrin's blind turn, his face we'll meet
deep on night's plane where crystal shadows are.

Only his likeness have we known so far
now he himself draws near on thief-like feet.

What were we but a double silence there,
a shadow-pair with hands of twined deceit?
Our hands, reclothed in sudden truth, complete,
bless now the dread advancing messenger.

It's late, and darkens. Keep yet far from me
the stifling dark, this life of deathly malice!

The rest be but a thread of dusk, a pause,
skyline of blood within the bitter chalice
that smiling angel from our thirst withdraws,
we'll bring the angel down and drink the sea.

Monuments draped in blood, the Paris-sky
a planewing's colour in the setting sun,

I've dreamed it all, and heard once more begun
far-off a song, like sparks blown broad and high.

So long I've loved this town, with such a tie,
inside a room with walls of honey and dawn,
an old grey dawn, low-roofed. And palely drawn
in mirror-frost a proud face brooding, shy.

Mahogany furniture. On marble lay
a flute. By leaded windows trees a-sway,
chestnuts, which patterned their sharp greenery:


I know. I stood quite near the window-bay,
The pavements rang with sounds of holiday,
a holiday all the days, just like the sea.

O give my shadowy lyre at least this choice:
beneath the galleries' jumbled cross, in fear,
to lift again, one flash, its murdered voice
and see you, comely future athlete, clear.

Glaive on the slumbering monster's stairway thrown!
The long day's father, son of all decays,
it's you who come to break each joint and bone
within this double who like sickness weighs
dead on the waking limbs, oppressed and sore,
but henceforth glad to spew up sleep. No more
the eyes ask slumber. Noon with truceless beams
will snatch their shadow from the messenger's feet.
O, this may be the last eve we shall meet,
since we must dream, let's dream the death of dreams.

The poets will return to earth some day.
The enchanted grot, the lake, they'll see anew,
children in groves of Cythera at play,
the vale of vows, the house of sins they knew,
all mistresses whom thought has put away,
sorrowing sisters and strange women too,
faery goodluck and pride that leans to woo
their lonely brows with kisses gently gay.
And under the mad masks they'll recognise
at farandoles amid the carnival-bluster
their finest songs delivered from the griefs
that give them birth. Then glad in evening skies
they'll go again with blessings on the lustre,
unending love, the wind, the blood, the waves.

These Sonnets, composed in a Vichy prison and written down later, are translated by JACK LINDSAY.



Tristan Tzara

DIALECTICS OF POETRY

POETRY IS A COMPLEX PHENOMENON; AND IF, UP TO THE present, we do not consider the attempts at definition satisfactory, at least we can use them to delimit a method through which we may move towards the solution. In the first place, poetry appears to be tied up with language. But, on reflection, we see that language itself raises a host of problems, the starting-points of which are bound up with a wide body of social and intellectual manifestations.

In the first place, language is revealed as a phenomenon so intimately connected with thought that it is often found indistinguishable and even itself becomes the origin of thought. It is the aim of this essay to show that the links between thought and poetry are contained in the structure of being, and that in consequence, poetry is not only a more-or-less conventional literary mode, but constitutes at the same time a particular form of the expression of thought.

If words are signs and if language is the method of organizing those signs for communication between individuals, it is not less true that in its totality language represents something very much more deeply-rooted. The proof of this is that at each stage of the evolution of humanity language presents the sum total of attained consciousness, and that the constant change to which it is liable expresses the perpetual movement of the social groups which play upon the form of the language. By a choice which linguists are beginning to elucidate, people find a form adequate to the new needs demanded by the new elements and innovations of social life. The formation of neologisms (subject to laws by which a certain faculty of invention is developed out of metaphorical comparison) and the "incorrect" usage of often incomprehensible terms and superimpositions of phrases, are dominant factors in the ceaseless enriching of popular speech.

New needs create new norms of expression. The constructions of slang and trade-lingos are perhaps a survival of the use of secret languages in primitive society; but these survivals themselves have definite functions which in default of other terms, I will call mythical—functions which are still alive in the unconscious of every individual. These functions are endowed with the power of concentrating and dramatizing the psychic depths of the individual; they are given free rein in dreams; they set in motion broken-up memories or aspirations; and it is they which we call poetic when we are dealing with man in his waking state. I mean to say by that, that poetry is a human function present in the spirit of every individual; that it acts on mass-formations, and, in a diffused way, on the whole breadth of the phenomena of life.

This imaginative function plays an important role in one of the faculties which everyone possesses: Invention. Its principal dynamic is Association or the chance juxtaposition of different elements which could not coincide except for an accidental point at which memory takes the form of a game with definite rules and with very many possible results. Association can therefore be the object of a formal interconnection, based on the sounds of word or ideal—that is to say, the resultant of a subjective memory with a fact or an image as point of reference.

But language is a collective phenomenon. The invention of an individual cannot become valid until it has been experienced by a group of other individuals who adapt it as a more-or-less adequate expression of their own needs. It is along something of these lines that popular poetry is passed on. The creation of an individual, it is sampled and corrected by a great number of people before it finds its definitive form. The precise sense of the speech-expression invented by this process can be taken over by the mass of people, even if the events that evoked it and the mechanism which presided over its birth are both forgotten. Thus arise those curious transpositions of meaning and the ready-made expressions which come to meet quite different needs from those for which they were originally intended.

Locutions, commonplaces and proverbs are the poetic formulations of the popular genius. Advertisements and slogans are still today the crystallizations of this faculty of invention which, although utilitarian, does not for that reason lack true poetic elements. Imagination, which, as its name implies, invokes the use

of *images*, is accompanied by figurative representations and creates the modern mythology. It is the mythology of the manufactured article, of our industrialized epoch, of production and consumption, of commerce and means of transport. The laughing face of the fat baby is identified with Cadum soap; and if the flag concentrates the national virtues, a concentration which bursts out of an act of "magical" solidarity, we should remember that the Roman legions carried effigies of totems the significance of which they had forgotten, just as the clans carried theirs, and that the sacred characters with which they were animated exercised a concrete influence on human behaviour.

There are myths of today which, in spite of their transitoriness, work on the mass of the people. If, before the war, we knew that of Greta Garbo, other myths are being formed or are in process of disappearing, but what provokes the need for them, their imaged crystallization, must be linked up with survivals of primitive life. A certain animism persists under the guise of metaphorical representation. The more we analyse the popular mentality, the better we can unravel the thread. All the legends and superstitions, the so-called magic properties contained in amulets or in objects of good-luck, medicines, sorceries, supernaturally clear visions, fortune-tellers, with globes or cards, clairvoyants and mediums—all this gamut of phenomena, well known to sociologists and ethnologists, still ferments and has its effect in a civilization turned more and more towards practical things.

True, the progress of rational culture makes these survivals obsolete. But the inner faculties which ensure their continued functioning, do not fade out for all that. They take their revenge in daydreams and in dreams, because, canalized towards semi-rational activities, they form a defence against the confusion between dream and reality. The loss of control over the respective limits of these two gives rise to neuroses, moral deficiency and weakness of will. Poetic activity can play a useful part as a method of compensation. For it too is linked to the symbolic phenomena which were mentioned before. In this way poetry puts on a character of utility, of necessity, and not of *enjoyment*. To experience the effects, the reader must not wait until they are brought to him on a plate. Poetry must arouse in him an activity corresponding to the writer's. The reader must battle to conquer the sense and the content. He must re-create the poetry to his own

image. Poetry is an object to be conquered, all passivity before it leads only to deception.

Language, creator and simultaneously vehicle of thought, will express thought under its different modalities. In order to fuse its various forms, it will translate into new terms its working-out on the conventional plane; and the interpretation it gives will include a large degree of invention, in which the play of miming delimits the personality of the speaker. Experience teaches us that two modes of thought oppose and complete one another within each individual. The mode of thought which we will call *Non-Directed*, is primitive thought, localized, whose existence is revealed by superimposed plaques of imagery; it is unproductive, associative, potential. This mode of thought is that of the dream; we become conscious of it when we catch ourselves drifting into what we commonly call "thinking of nothing." We might take the extreme form of this as the Dream. The other mode of thought is *Directed* thought; the mode of thought is essentially modern, dynamic, productive, discursive, thought constantly directed to an aim, the mode of thought which is scientific, coherent, and which is the hallmark of man today.

With this distinction between the two modes, it will be easy to see that language, in so far as it is influenced by discursive demands, constitutes primarily an instrument of directed thought. Historically we can conceive of a stage of primitive humanity when the dominant mode of thought was *Non-directed*. . . . The stage of non-directed thought would correspond (if one takes into consideration the state of perfection attained in manufactured objects by primitive man) to a very slow evolution in which, over a considerable number of centuries, the progress realized was constant, the thought minimal. At a given moment of evolution, there is necessarily produced a sudden break. That represents the jump, the forward leap, concerning which Hegel says that at determined points it breaks *the nodal line of measurable relationships*. From this point, a point of saturation, the productive technique of man develops rapidly, and the upward swing which controls its perfecting hurries along the trail into history, until it becomes the industry of our day, the totality of the extended effort of science and of directed thought.

In the same way that this directed thought of today was a seed in

the mass of primitive thought (a seed that prepared the break and the sharp reversal of values which provoked progressive speeding-up or accumulation of directed thought), thinking at this present time involves in a disparaged form, the embryonic remains of *Non-Directed* thought. What we today call dream, abnormal activity (since hidden from consciousness and outside its control), was able, in a preceding stage, to play an entirely different role. It is even probable that from it was drawn the spiritual nourishment, principal source of consciousness, with its roots in those myths which forged the rigid but complex framework of the religious and social life of savages. In any case we know that the social and religious manifestations of primitive folk are merged in a single expression controlling the behaviour of individuals and groups.

Poetry, as it is seen today (a phenomenon in modern life bound up with a mass of other phenomena, but, in spite of all this detached from that life) could among primitives be considered as a vital reality, common to all. Non-directed thought, myth, metaphoric activity and dream, are therefore for the primitive living forms corresponding to what for us is enclosed in the general term poetry.

Yet, in this functional reversal, the work of art and poetry do not always keep the same value. Nowadays bound to our *Non-Directed* thought, and set in a lesser position in comparison with the mass of directed thought in which modern civilization is soaked—art and poetry among primitives express the result of the effort *directed* towards coherence, an effort of thought compressed by the mass of *non-directed* thought which characterized its mental life. Useful objects (objects of daily use, fetishes, medicines, ancestral portraits, incantation formulas, etc.), art and poetry start off as a real part of the primitive religious and social system, and there is no need to waste time in showing that it is not at the level of our existing mode of thought we must seek their inner meaning. . . .

In analysing the properties of romantic poetry, a series of phenomena are observed which recall the characteristics of non-directed thought. The unconscious plays a more and more important role there. Earthly forces and the savage or blind passions of nature seem to dominate the coherent effort of man trying to establish the order of reason. Finally the dream is considered no longer as an act of hope and nostalgia, but also as a mystery ready for elucidation,

playing an active part in the life of the individual. "Correspondences," in the sense which Baudelaire discovered later, act like concrete realities, and the spirit of revolt at last takes on a more and more conscious form. The poet is in a way an a-social being, because he tries to distinguish himself from the bourgeois, he strives to become one of a clan, he tends to mark himself out, even if he does not make himself a part of a secret society which demands an initiation and rites recalling the secret societies of primitive peoples. A new element appears, that of Lycanthropies (introduced by Peter Borel) with poet considered as famished wolf rending all in his way, the price of knowledge being despair.

The tradition of clans of poets was kept up until the dadaists and surrealists. There were no longer initiations or rites to observe, but survivals still persisted. Certain words were taboo, others served as totems. The *Bousingos* who, in 1848, included among their members Gerard de Nerval, Petrus Borel and O'Nedy wore extravagant clothes, outraged people by their attitude. Legends were created around them; and we know that in general the lives of poets beget myths. We recall how Gerard de Nerval strolled through Paris with a lobster on a lead, how the whole life of Baudelaire was linked with a series of more or less fabricated legends; how Villiers de l'Isle-Adam claimed the throne of Greece as the last representative of a Byzantine dynasty; and how Rimbaud, after his escapade during the Commune in 1870, was accredited with a set of the most scandalous exploits. Until he left for Abyssinia and ceased writing poetry, all that Rimbaud did was in constant revolt against the mediocrity of life.

In a form more or less conscious, we see then that since romanticism the poet is involved in the movement of life. He takes part or refuses to take part. His poetry has no reason for existing except when he assumes an attitude to society. He takes his stand sometimes outside life, and refuses everything which life offers, sometimes at the very centre of life's activity in order to analyse it or to break its set schemes.

Dada therefore took over a tradition already well-established in the history of poetry. It simply continued that tradition by opposing its own absurdity to the absurdity of the world, making a sounding-board for that absurdity with the voluntary illogicality of its action. Dada attacked language, logic and society's foundations. The Surrealists, while maintaining its characteristics,

tried to objectify them. In their work, directed thought reasserts itself, but it has as object the mass of consciousness resulting from non-directed thought, particularly dream and irrational actions, that is to say, actions not yet fully explained. Surrealism sets itself the task of studying the functioning of the imaginative faculties by deliberately provoking abnormal psychic states. In another sense, the individual revolt of Dada, anarchic and unproductive, orientates itself towards a collective action with a revolutionary Marxist character. The problem of identification between poetry and revolution is from this time onwards placed on a concrete basis, that of the action of working-class parties.

We have to try and find out whether we are nowadays taking part in a break in movement, a leap in history, or in a continuation of the working-out of pre 1940 problems, as they showed themselves on the way to their solution. But this movement of break and this continuity are so imbricated, that it is difficult to analyse them separately. The social act and the act of history are themselves in full process of evolution, and a leap forward in social life seems bound to take place in the present, which makes the problems of poetry and its participation in the spiritual life of the times hard to objectify. These problems form a part of the process of actualization by which, at every instant, man finds himself disabled before life; for he asks himself how far he can intervene as an element—subject or ruler—in the dizzying race of events. Far from thinking of himself as separated from them, when he tries to define the role which he plays in the making of history, he is forced to introduce impersonal ideas, furnished with defined properties, of which the majority take on the character of symbols and are endowed, one might say, with anthropomorphic capacities. The determinism which animates them springs from the specific will of classes of individuals acting according to their needs, their interests, their necessities and their truth.

Therefore, after having sailed close to death, having risked death, there is an impression that the entire nation, living through a new adolescence, is taking stock of its being. If the individual also only arrives at consciousness at the price of a crisis during which he has risked death, the poet is submitted, right throughout his productive life, to the action of this movement which puts his very existence in jeopardy. It is in this way that he *lives* poetry. He lives poetry every moment that he affirms his

existence. It is an uninterrupted succession of negations-of-the-negation. No work of poetry is valid except to the degree to which it has been lived. The poetic image itself, as much as experience, is not only a product of reason and imagination, it is valid only if it has been *lived*. The poetic image is a product of consciousness; but, consciousness can only be a lesson that must be learned, it must be taken from the exterior world, that is to say, it must result from a more or less violent action on the reality which surrounds us. Every creation is therefore for the poet, a conquest, an aggressive affirmation of his consciousness.

But is poetic creation a phenomenon touching on every activity? or should it be considered as such only during localized and limited moments? It is indeed during such moments that we become conscious of the activity of the poet, of written poems, but we must not believe that this activity is the only manifestation of poetry. Poetic activity is one of the forms of the movement of thought. As we have already stated, it puts into the structure of language the totality of different processes of symbolization and metaphoric interpretation, the origin of which is forgotten and which have passed to the stage of being crystallized, scarified, in common usage. Language, as a living phenomenon, continues to enrich itself thanks to the same properties of interpretation which have for all time dominated this group-effort of mankind towards the expression of its thought. Thought contains in its functioning the embryo of what we call poetry. That is the difference which must be established between poetry, phenomenon of the spirit, and poetry-worked-out or poetry expressing specialized types, foreign to the profound totality of the individual such as he is determined by the inner drama of his negation. The mode of *non-directed* thought corresponds to the *poetry-activity of the Spirit*, non-directed poetry, spread over the ensemble of things and beings more or less integral to the individual or *potential poetry*. The mode of *directed* thinking corresponds to poetry-means-of-expression, poetry directed towards a definite aim, where the principal content is language or *manifest poetry*. This in its extreme form is degraded to the description of feelings, and even of objects and dogmas, as happened in the 18th century.

What in fact appears to define poetry, is something of a compromise between the first and second form. There is however a certain tendency towards the poetry-activity of the spirit which

shows itself in the desire to dissolve the conceptual hardness of language in so far as language, in the poet's work, contains still too much that is utilitarian, mechanically logical or flatly descriptive.

Just like social life, poetry can undergo regressive influences. There is no reason to disown the part won in the poetic sphere, which, inscribed in the system of modes of human knowledge, builds an element of progress out of this fact. New tendencies cannot validly affirm themselves unless they deny real acquisitions at the same time as they absorb them into their essence, into their historical future. The attempts to create with the aid of surrealist formulas a new parnassien poetry are fraught with impotence. They are undeniably the sign of a reactionary predisposition.

Nothing refutes the fact that when it is a case of getting as close as possible to the residual basis of man, poetry finds its source in an event or that it results from occasional circumstances. But on the single condition that the event itself should have the validity of a lived experience. Attention must here be drawn to what can be factitious or fabricated in the use of poetic "procedures", shams of the risk which with its dramatic nature accompanies, denies and recreates the poet.

The term *engaged poetry*, of which there has been so much discussion, has no sense unless the engagement between subject-poet and object-event passes beyond the moral and spiritual discipline to become the entire struggle of the poet with life, his identification with poetry. It is only by paying this price that poetry can claim to become a *means of knowledge* and not stay, as it does too often, a dim occupation of an aesthetic order, a pleasure of the senses. It is the poet who has significance in the scale of human values, the written poem being only one of his occasional manifestations, a witness, a landmark. The written work of a poet is not an odd series of isolated pieces, each having a beginning and an end in themselves, but should be conceived as the flow of a continuous series in process of evolution.

The prophetic signs which put themselves forwards in poetry, towards a keener conception of directed thought, including therefore a growth of poetry-means-of-expression, do they give us a glimpse of a new break in the line of measurable relationships, which was mentioned earlier on? This, it seems to me, depends on the course of events in the social sphere. The question of knowing to what degree the epoch we are living in is an epoch of breaks or

of slow evolution, remains on the table. But a new society will bring in its train a new culture as well as a new superstructure, and, in consequence, a new form of poetry which, while opposing itself to contemporary poetry, will be based on it, and after having absorbed all its fundamental character, will lift it to a higher level, but will assign to it itself a contrary meaning.

The task of poetry today seems to me to lie in giving to poetic existence conscious content, that is to say, in *objectifying potential poetry*. As poetry is found practically everywhere, it is necessary either by education or by the moulding of certain disposition of the spirit, to give back to the individual what schooling and social constraint have stolen from him, or rather, pushed back into the dark depths of his personality. Children, before they have undergone the oppression of their school-days, and madmen, in so far as they refuse to bear the burden of society, which partly constitutes their anguish, show us that poetic existence is a human faculty, proper to every individual. The task is to bring it into harmony with social behaviour, integrate it, cultivate it. The task is to spread out once again the love of the poetry of life—in street decoration, cinema, theatre, etc.—which will revive again the folklore and the popular poetry which our society has literally murdered.

It must be brought in once again to the factory, the office and the school. It will be necessary to rediscover for the adult world the supremely healthy functioning of imaginative powers by which man assimilates the primitive forces of life and which help him to overcome the pessimism to which existing society condemns him.

The poet, who has taken cognisance of the surrounding world by means of a violent act which has put his existence in jeopardy, may be permitted, in the very name of the risk he has taken, to throw out all in life which does not conform to his feeling, all which denies it. Behind all he had social organization which, on different pretexts, finally arrives at contradictions and inhuman conflicts, allowing one section of humanity to be oppressed by another, the poet feels the immorality and the lie. He is essentially a revolutionary. His profound feeling reaches towards the transformation of the actual world into a world where man can once more be wholly in harmony with himself. But the present world is such that all isolated revolt is not only useless, it is harmful, because consecrated to a certain consubstantial defect, it leads to evasion or to withdrawal into a pessimistic attitude.

The life of our time for the poet is called Revolution. With everything that that means in terms of action, faith, adherence to the immediate necessities of men as they are, as they are becoming, as they are struggling, living and loving. It is the constructive character of this position which alone can assure to the free development of poetry a natural path where imagination and dream come together again with action and revolution on the concrete plane of the struggle for the liberation of mankind.

Translated from the French by ANN LINDSAY.

Hugh MacDiarmid

YET HAE I SILENCE LEFT

Yet hae I silence left, the croon o' a'.

*No' her, wha on the hills lang syne I saw
liftin' a foreheid o perpetual snaw.*

*No' her, wha in the how-dumb-deid o' nicht
kyths like Eternity in Time's despite.*

*No' her, withooten shape, wha's name is Daith,
no' him, unkennable abies to faith*


*— God who, gin e'er He saw a man, 'ud be
e'en mair dumfooned at the sicht than he.*

*— But Him, whom nocht in man or deity,
or daith or dried or laneliness can touch,
wha's deed owre often and has seen owre much.*

*wha's deed owre often and has seen owre much.
O I hae silence left*

*— "And weel ye nicht,"
sae Jean'll say, "after sic a nicht!"*

How-dumb-deid : very dead of night. *Kyths* : appears. *Abies* : except.



Jack Lindsay

CATULLUS: POET OF THE CÆSARIAN REVOLUTION

ALMOST ALL THAT WE KNOW ABOUT CATULLUS COMES FROM his poems; and yet there are few poets whose life we can grasp in more detail or with better understanding of its basic pattern. He was proud of being *doctus poeta*, a fully conscious craftsman. Writing in Latin, he sought to draw as richly as possible on Greek tradition; and yet he was one of the most original of poets. Indeed, no poet has managed to keep so close to the immediate and shattering stuff of experience and yet produce art of crystalline integrity. Ever since Sappho and Alkaios there had been poets writing in lyric release or giving elegiac form to emotional realizations; but this coincidence of the lyric depths and the everyday material was something new.

What did it involve? Among other things, a new attitude of the poet to his art and to society. Catullus may have thought he was merely carrying on the work of the Alexandrian Greeks; in fact he was giving a violent twist to their attitudes. With him a fully romantic notion of the poet's status and function is born. Despite the extreme clarity of his form, he may be called the first great romantic poet.

He is intensely alone, opposing his individuality to society as a self-sufficient dynamic. But the social patterns, which through Greek culture expressed themselves in the form of Myth, are not thereby discarded. Rather they are put in a new perspective. They are cut away from the folk-roots, but not left to wither; rather they are taken frenetically into the self, the self-sufficient poetic act. Hence the doomed aspect of the poet. No longer can he seek in the myths of his culture the symbols of participation, of tragic acceptance, which keep individual and society united yet separate, in a stable balance. Now he must create his own myth, his own fate. He must live out his Tragedy. Oedipus is no longer

a symbol of fused terror and safety, which stabilizes a dangerous aspect of experience; Oedipus is the poet in his own life, and the poet must dramatize out the full pattern without an external point of reference in communal agreements.

Thus a new psychological depth is born in poetry. For the first time the oddments of trivial day-to-day experience can be used as material; for they are all impregnated with the unresolved tragic tension. Oedipus is no longer a legendary King among ancient stones and oracular lights; he might just as well be drinking in a bar near the Forum or making up a political epigram. The lesser poet may lose the great pattern, may dissipate the deep tensions, in the fluttering details and the piling-up of random contacts; but the poet who can carry on with the pattern, the tensions intact, has brought a new terrifying and exalting focus into every-day event.

That poet was Catullus. The struggle quickly broke him up, but not before he had defined the new centres of living. A new awareness of division, a new need of union.

I love and hate. You ask how that can be.

I do not know, but know it's agony.

With that epigram a new depth of consciousness entered the world.

ii

Gaius Valerius Catullus was born, probably in 84 B.C. at Verona in North Italy, the area known as Cisalpine Gaul. The Celts had been swarming into that area for centuries; and at Catullus's birth it was only loosely under Roman rule. Then, when he was five or six, it became a normal Province. His father was an important burgess, who may have dealt in the textiles for which Verona was a centre.

Diverse types and groupings were a strong element in Catullus's childhood-world. Fair-haired Celts dressed in blankets and breeches, Rhætic mountaineers, Venetic peasants, black-eyed Illyrian shepherds, even a few Teuton traders or stumpy Etruscans; the toga would still be an exception. Verona appointed priests for the Rætic gods Ihamnagalle Sgna and Cuslanus in the villages; and Catullus knew the lonely gullies of the hills and the deep forests. Not that Verona lay in some Celtic backblocks. For centuries, even millenia, it had been linked with trade networks

to Southern Italy, the Rhine, Central Europe, and the Balkans: and the invading Etruscans had brought it a rich culture. Now it was moving rapidly ahead in commercial prosperity.

What we have to keep in mind is the tension there between a strong class of yeoman-farmers, with many tribal elements still persisting, and the money-pressure drawing Verona into the full Italian system and making Roman politics of direct importance. Then we can understand the social background of Catullus's intense eagerness, his difference in the cosmopolitan scene. More, we can understand why the Po valley and its yeoman play a key-part in the whole great revolutionary phase of human development represented by Cæsar's foundation of the Empire. These Celtic yeoman-farmers provided Cæsar's best soldiers; out of them came the backbone of the legions and the civil service of the early Empire. And the great period of Latin literature—between 100 and 1 B.C. was largely the work of men of the North. In Catullus's period, besides himself, there were Cinna, Furius Bibaculus, Cæcilius of Novum Comum, Cassius of Parma, Aemilius Macer of Verona; and following them came Gallus and Vergil. In prose, Cornelius Nepos and Livy worked at History; Pliny the Elder at Natural History; Quintilius Varus and Alferus Varus at the critical reconstruction of Law. There is no exaggeration then in seeing the foundations of the imperial culture, of such incalculable importance for the evolution of Europe, as to a considerable extent the work of the men of the North, where freedom had a concrete value forgotten in the cities of the South. Among these Celts resided the most powerful tension at the time between a folk-inheritance and a cosmopolitan (Græco-Roman) culture, between the man-to-man attitudes of a farming community with strong clan-survivals and the monetary compulsions of a mercantile society.

111

At Catullus's birth, for over fifty years the Roman State had been rent by violent struggle. From the moment that the Gracchi took up the cause of the dispossessed farmers and the city-poor, there was no civic peace; the conflict raged, with moments of bloody fury and brief lulls, till it culminated in the Civil War between Cæsar and the senatorial landlords.

In 63 B.C. Catilina's insurrection broke out in a limited flare-up which showed that no solution for the crisis could be found

within Rome itself. A lesson which Cæsar learned. For Catullus it meant a few exciting months of rumours; and then Metellus Celer, the prætor who had hurried north to close the Appenine defiles, took up the province and stayed at Verona during a part of his governmental duties.

He met the young poet at the house of the elder Catullus and rashly gave him letters of introduction at Rome; he himself would be back there shortly, to canvass for the consularship-elections of 61 B.C. So we find Catullus, soon after his arrival at Rome, in the circle of Metellus's wife, Clodia: in fact falling in desperate love with the lady, a patrician of a branch which had become impoverished, rebellious, capable of most things. Her brother Clodius, who caused a great scandal by dressing as a woman and profaning the sacred rites of the Mother, turned into anarchist gangleader who aroused genuine religious devotion among the Roman masses; she herself was a leader of the New Women, who outraged aristocratic opinion by going to dinner-parties unchaperoned and giving seaside-parties at Baiae. By all accounts she was fascinating, highly cultured, fierce, ambitious, and sensual.

Catullus addressed her as *Lesbia*, and in due course became her lover, haunting her house in the fashionable Clivus Victoriæ, on the Palatine, which overlooked the Forum. Behind it stood the Temple of the Bona Dea, allowed to open only at certain times in the year; from which the cymbals and shrill galliambic songs of the eunuch-priest could be faintly heard.

In 59 B.C. Metellus died, and Catullus' relations with Clodia reached breaking-point. His jealous agonies were reducing him to despair and ill-health when news came that his brother, visiting Asia Minor presumably on a staff-job, had died in the Troad. He hastened back to Verona. A friend, Manlius Torquatus, a dabbler in Epicurean philosophy, wrote to warn him that Clodia was being definitely lost. Catullus wrote a long poem promising better behaviour for the future; but on his return to Rome he found Clodia the mistress of the keenly-witted bitter Cælius Rufus, who had lately come back from Africa (whither his father, a Neopolitan banker, had hurried him off through fear of complicity in the Catilina-outbreak).

Catullus wrote furious poems attacking Cælius; but drifted away from his obsession with Clodia into politics, following the

radical line of his friend Calvus which hoped to revive the old Republican integrities in terms adequate to a changed world. Calvus and his group sharply attacked the party-bosses, especially Pompey and Cæsar whom they saw as alike pledged to imperialist adventures. Their weakness lay in the lack of any mass-basis for their effort of resistance.

Catullus wrote a little-epic *The Bridals of Thetis*; went off with this friend Cinna on the staff of Memmius (to whom Lucretius dedicated his great poem) to Bithynia. At least one main reason for the voyage was a desire to visit his brother's grave; at which he wrote the magnificent epigram ending, "And forever, brother, hail and farewell for ever." In the Troad he saw the priests of the Great Mother at their dances, and wrote his *Attis* in their wild galliambics. He bought a yacht and sailed back with Cinna; somehow managing to get the yacht up the Po and across to Lago Maggiore, where he had a villa on the peninsular of Sirmio.

Returning to Rome, he plunged afresh into all the excitements, social, political, and amorous of his group. But his ill health was increasing. He went back to Verona, and, partly through a girl Ameana, he launched a series of attacks on Cæsar's chief engineer, Mamurra, and on Cæsar himself, who was wintering there from his Gallic campaigns. Such a poem as the following, where the "pervert Romulus" is Cæsar, and Cockerel is Mamurra, and Son-in-law is Pompey:

What eye can view this sore and not be blinded
except a gambling glutton basely-minded?
Far Britons and the long-haired Gauls have grieved
for pocket-money that Mamurra thieved.
You pervert Romulus, don't you see the game?
you gluttonous gambler basely lost to shame?
Speak, shall the cocksure braggart wield the rod
and make a town of wives obey his nod
like a white treading-pigeon or a god?
You pervert Romulus, don't you care a button,
you basely-minded gambler turned a glutton?
Is this why you went westward wandering,
that flaccid Cockerel, anxious to be dirty,
should waste some twenty millions odd, or thirty?
What matter figures to such evil generosity?
Not ruinous yet enough his impecuniosity?

*His patrimony first was lewdly lost,
his Pontic money next. To meet the cost
Spain then paid cash from Tagus' golden streams,
and now the Gauls and Britons have bad dreams.
Why then support the beast? You'll learn too late,
at every meal he swallows an estate;
yet you and son-in-law, you mates of might,
consume the City's powers to bloat such blight.*

Cæsar asked him to dinner and complained mildly of the "indelible blot" of the poems, and tried to explain his position.

Catullus, back in Rome, found consumption rapidly developing. He wrote a poem in which he finally set out the ideal of love against war, and expressed contempt for the impending expeditions against Britain and Syria. Clodia, who had now quarrelled with Cælius, made some tentative approaches of reconciliation; but Catullus replied in a sapphic ode, in which he echoed the first poem he had written in awe-struck love and into which he slipped a recantatory tribute to Cæsar. He died shortly after.

*I'm sick and not to be restored,
sick, Cornificius, and bored,
worse every day, worse every hour.
Why don't you write and share your mirth,
a comfort well within your power?
I'm angry: has my love no worth?
Write then; a line, though sad, will ease
like songs wept by Simonides.*

iv

Catullus was one of the Neoterics, the New Poets, who, led by the grammarian Valerius Cato (freedman of a Gaul), opposed the nationalist themes and the creaking versification of the accepted schools. Consciously, their whole effort was to carry over into Latin poetry the scrupulously fine craftsmanship of the Hellenistic writers; but in seeking to be scholarly they became the mouthpieces of everyday experience. For colloquial diction and rhythms were found to have their values in the fight against a false poeticality.

The need for a precise and easy wit, mingled with a deep respect for scholarship, issued in poems like this, written after the return from Bithynia:

As down the Forum-ways I strolled
 Varus came up and took my arm.
 "Now you must meet my girl," he said:
 indeed a piece with grace and charm.
 We chatted. She inquired at length
 about Bithynia and its fare,
 What kind of life its people led
 and what I'd gained by sweating there.
 I told the facts. "There's scarcely chaff
 To feed the praetor and his staff,
 and not one meal of fattening gold.
 Besides, the praetor, to our harm,
 his vicious ways to sap our strength."
 "Yes, but you gained, you must admit,"
 she said, "some bearers for your chair.
 That's where they come from, isn't it?"
 I gave a condescending smile.
 "Bad as my luck may well appear,
 at least such slaves are not my lack
 I've eight good hefty ones, my dear."
 Now, here or there, I'd not one man
 able to hoist upon his back
 an ancient broken-legged divan;
 but she, with proper harlotry,
 wheedled, "Catullus, send them here,
 do lend them for a little while,
 Serapis needs a call from me."
 "In saying they were mine, I meant,"
 I answered, "they're my friend's. You see,
 They're Cinna's. Gaius, that's his name,
 For, mine or his, it's all the same.
 I use them; so they're mine, though lent,
 and you're a tactless fool to scan
 a chance remark so searchingly."*

The Neoterics thus came between the old schools (who were carrying stalely on what had been once a grand creative innovation by Ennius) and the Augustan poets such as Vergil and Horace, who revived the nationalist themes on the area that the Neoterics had cleared. But though it was the Augustans who became the official spokesmen of the new "world-culture" and provided the

basis for the expansion of that culture, it was the Neoterics who had released the springs of creativity: and in fact their tradition it was which persisted underneath the Augustan synthesis (even in the Augustan age itself, to a certain extent, in Propertius) and in time broke through, again and again, to provide new starts—e.g. through the African school of the 2nd century A.D. with its popularizing archaisms, its learned awareness of Greek forms and developments, its colloquial note and its rich imagery. The poets who in time made a lovely lyric vehicle out of the trochaic legionary march-songs were close to the Catullus who picked up the hymnal metre of the Mother's priests. These counter-movements breaking into the imperial verse-forms were of course highly complex in motive and material; but it is true to see them as linked rather with the experimental variety and freshness of the Neoterics than with the Augustan fixing of norms.

Catullus's contribution can perhaps best be isolated if we consider him as the begetter of the true Love-Elegy. The Greek Elegy had had a long ancestry, arising from a ritual-lament and developing into a diversely-oriented poem of reflection on life. The Hellenistics emphasized the love-theme, but without introducing the note of immediate personal experience. They kept such things mainly for the epigram (as earlier poets for the lyric). What Catullus did was to make the Latin epigram a vitally adequate vehicle for momentary crisis of emotion, joy or misery; and then to expand the epigram into the elegy. He thus recreated the elegy and in fact devised a new form, a dramatized type of lyric. His fellow-northerner Gallus carried the process a step further; and then the form was expanded and stabilized by Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid.

Thus, Catullus gave the love-epigram itself a new poignancy:

*where have you led me, Lesbia? For I'm blind
with such a ruinous devotion curst.
I could not wish you well though good and kind,
nor cease from loving though you did your worst.*

He extends this type of statement, step by step:

*You said Catullus was your friend alone,
Lesbia, and not a god could rival me.
You were no common mistress in those days:
you were a child, dear child, till came the end,
I know you now, and lust the more. You've grown*

*a thing of poor cheap grain, won easily.
How's that? Ah, she who wantonly betrays
may heat the lover but she'll lose the friend.*

And so on, till we meet a poem that has quite outgrown the epigram-limits and is a short but definite elegy, such as that which begins:

*If there is any pleasure to repeat
goods deeds in memory, if it can bless
to know that not one troth devoutley sworn
was broken or made idly in deceit,
then you've laid up an age of happiness,
Catullus, from this love's despair and scorn.
Nothing of trust that man can do or say
was left untried in trustful word and deed;
and all is lost, all mocked, all thrown away.
Why then for further suffering still plead? . . .*

Only two new forms came out of Latin classical poetry—the occasional poem born direct from everyday experience. and the love-elegy—both creations of Catullus. Both were of the utmost importance; essential moments of poetic achievement in world-history. In creating them, Catullus proved himself the poet of the great moment of revolutionary change in which he was caught up. He it was who was able to express man with a new rich individualizing focus, giving poetic value to the most ordinary moments of social intercourse. He it was who was able to define the deep fissure running through emotion, through personality, and to resolve the desperate division in terms of a new poetic realization of love, trust, unity. Vergil strives to veil the conflict, to build on the stable elements arriving out of the Cæsarian Revolution; Catullus is the voice of that Revolution itself, of the dangerous moment of man which it represented. In him the process of spiritual change is grasped, held, directly uttered.

No poet had done anything like this before; and no poet was to do anything like it again for well over a thousand years. Catullus gives the personal pang a new fullness, a new depth of social relationship, precisely because he concentrates so naively on himself: obsessed by his own fate with an almost childlike extravagance and self-centredness until suddenly that fate deepens and coincides with the structure of myth, with the condition of all men.

The agony of Catullus under the scornful eyes of Clodia becomes the agony of a whole culture, a whole world of people, under the crucifying pressures. We can trace to a considerable extent in the poems the psychological process by which this deepening comes about; the way in which the poet's new romantic attitudes, based on a new evaluation of individual love, implicate the whole movement of man in his crucial epoch. We see how his intensity of love, which works by identifying him with the beloved, brings about its own tragic pang of aspiration, and because of his poetic integrity ends by begetting a new kind of unity between the Poet and History. We see how the derangement of a spirit can produce unbalances which throw it out of gear with existing values and relationships, yet which in time, through ceaseless creative effort, lock together into the structures of the future, the intuitions and images of union needed for the next stages of advance.

Catullus calls Clodia *Lesbia* and writes his first and last poem to her in Sapphic stanzas (a form which he introduced into Latin). That is, Clodia is made the image of *poetic* desire as well as a desired woman. Catullus wants to repeat Sappho's achievement, to become Sappho (the woman at the head of the lyric tradition) as well as embrace her. And so in the first poem he directly imitates Sappho, writes as Sappho herself wrote in the presence of a beloved woman. He himself is *Lesbia*, the lyric voice.

In his verses to Clodia's pet sparrow, he hopes to be as happy as Atalanta picking up the gold-apples that Hippomedon cast behind in the bridal race; in a poem written after his first anguished return to Verona he sends a translation which he compares to an apple put by a lover in a girl's lap and dropped guiltily by her as her mother comes in. In both cases the girl is Catullus himself; the apple-poem is both a betrayal of guilt and the resolving image of a new life that leads to the bridal bed.

In the long poem he wrote to Manlius from Verona he builds an elaborate symmetrical structure, with complex symbolic overtones. The Troad, where men died for Helen in the primal strife, the war of brothers, is the place also of his own grief. "My brother also died at Troy." He passionately identifies himself with his dead brother (as also in the earlier draft-poem to Manlius). He evokes a legend of the Trojan war—that of Laodamia who by her devotion gained back her slain husband—to link himself-as-his-brother with himself-as-Clodia's lover. He wants Clodia to be

faithful as Laodamia, to call him back from the death into which he has entered, his death as the brother in the Troad, as the lover in the Trojan war of original-sin: "Buried at ominous Troy, at Troy the hated, far in an alien land, and here mourn I." He sees Clodia entering the trysting-place as the love-goddess outside human control:

*The shining goddess gentle-footed came
and on the common threshold fluttered loose
from creaking sandals the quick ankle-flame.*

It is impossible to equate this free wild presence with the pure devoted Laodamia, so he ends by reversing the roles: Clodia is the god whose whim is law, and Catullus the deserted yearning wife.

*And though she's not content with me alone,
with her few faults I'll bear. I'll never be
a jealous idiot making futile moan.
For Juno, mistress of eternity
smothered the rage she felt when Jove would go
ramping among the womanflesh below.*

It is instructive to compare this ambivalent use of the myth with that of Propertius (I.19) where there is no ambiguity:

*Not with such light touch cleaved love to our eyes
to leave my dust with no returning life:
Protesilaos in death's blinded skies
still saw the face of his consoling wife.
Eager to grasp at joy with hands of air
in Thessaly a ghost came home of old.
Through all my lives your image shall I bear
And love shall cross death's sea, if love is bold.*

If now we look at the translation Catullus sent as the apple-of-guilt we find it a version of Callimachus's *Lock of Berenice*: the lock of hair the Queen dedicated lamentingly for the safe return of her brother-husband.† After what we have noted in the other poems it is not perhaps far fetched to consider that Catullus is reading himself into the lamenting Sister of this brother-and-sister union, and that that is why he chooses this poem for translation at the moment of grief over his dead brother. The Lock, which once grew on the girl, is then to be equated with the dropped Apples in the other poems. Lock and apple are hostage-images of the self: images of the lost-self, the rejected-self. Excretal images for the

unconscious, no doubt, but also potent images of redemption. The extremely inept introduction of the apples into these poems (which all commentators have pointed out) is explained when we see them as violent intrusions of a repressed imagery-complex.

In the Little-Epic critics have been worried by the juxtaposition of two apparently unrelated themes (linked by the device of describing an object-of-art). The main theme is a happy marriage, uniting men and gods; but against it two discordant elements are set. A prolonged account of the deserted true-loving girl Ariadne; and a concluding prophecy-epithalamion in which the Trojan war is foretold and which leads on to a bitter picture of contemporary corruption and violence. Here again the deepest elements of the poet's experience, his sense of his own betrayed love and truth, is packed into the image of a girl; and (despite the critics) the poem is a unity, in which the picture of betrayal is juxtaposed to the picture of happy bridals and finally fused with it in a prophetic denunciation of the evil discord in society which personal love-unions alone cannot solve.

From this poem, in which Catullus painfully moves to an objectified account of the whole situation (individual and society, sweetness and pang, union and discord, harmony and guilt), he leaps into a great work where the same theme is realized with lyric immediacy and the separated elements are fused passionately in a single whole. This is the *Attis*, written in the Troad or at least out of the memories of what he has seen there. The corybantic dance of the devoted eunuch-priests revives the echoes from the rear of Clodia's dissolute mansion; and the poem tells of the young man who seeks entire union with the Mother and finds that he has inverted his sex and given himself up to a life of regret and remorse from which there is no escape.

*Swiftly Attis went sailing across deep seas
on the feet of desire he entered the Phrygian trees.
He broke through the depths where the goddess's leaf-skirts are spread.
He was goaded with frenzy. Wings fluttered loose in his head. . . .*

It was in vain for the poet to end with a cry to the Mother.

*Far from my home keep this wild ecstasy.
Drive on the other, madden the others, not me.*

He had been driven, he had been maddened; and the remorse remained. *Cry out forever, my heart, and cry out again.*

In this tremendous poem the personal conflict of Catullus at last finds a universal symbol capable of containing the whole of its violent tensions. The rent poet, the castrated devotee, is one with the suffering soul of history, with the mass-experience which was so soon to issue in the symbol of the Crucified God.

*O earth the created me, earth that alone could save,
I fled from your fostering face like a runaway slave
I fled from your power to wander through Ida's groves
in lairs of the frost when the hungry wildbeast roves.
I dashed in my frenzy where dens of destruction lay sly.
O earth of my flesh, where is it, earth, that you lie?
My eyes are blind with desire to see you again.
for the rage of rapture has passed and left the pain.*

v

Thus, Catullus began with a provincial desire to embrace Græco-Roman culture at its richest in the proud body of Clodia, which also held the essence of rebellion against existing ways and conventions. Losing her, he moved to a radical political position, and, in a utopian defence of the Republic and its democratic forms, waged a *fronde* against the imperialists. Without giving up his anti-imperialist position he accepted the role of Cæsar; and at the same time realized through his own sense of defeat and loss the historical pattern of revolutionary change which, beyond the political formations, moved into a universal and unifying symbol of death and resurrection. And in travelling along this course he struck out basic new forms and poetic tensions. In contemplating them we seem to see the world of man breaking up, founding new organizing axes in the moment of zygote transformation, after which the expansion of fresh symmetries, of stable working-out, is possible.

* The Temple of Isis and Serapis was a favourite with demi-mondaines.

† Ptolemy was in fact B's cousin; but the poem calls her his sister, and the correct atmosphere of a Ptolemaic marriage was one of religiously exalted incest.

All translations are line for line, and by J.L. The numbers of the latin originals (in the order of the poems here cited) are: lxxxv, xxviii, xxxviii, x, lxxv, lxxiii, lxxvi, the Epistle to Manlines, lxviii, and the *Attis*, lxiii.



Boris Pasternak

SHAKESPEARE'S IMAGERY & RHYTHM

SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF IMAGERY IS NOT ALWAYS OF THE same sort. At times it shows the loftiest poetry, demanding a response as lofty; at times it shows clear rhetoric weighted with a score of circumlocutions instead of the one apt word which was on the tip of his tongue but eluded him in his haste. Be that as it may his metaphorical language in its scope and its rhetoric, at its heights and in its weaknesses, keeps faithful to the principles of all true symbolism.

Metaphor is the natural outcome of the brevity of man's life and the immensity of the tasks he has planned ahead. The incomprehensibility here has forced him to look upon things with the far-sightedness of an eagle and express himself in momentary flashes immediate in apprehension. That is the essence of poetry.

Metaphor is the stenography of the larger personality, the shorthand of the spirit.

The tempestuous brushwork of Rembrandt, Michelangelo or Titian is not the outcome of a calculated decision. The insatiable hunger that urged them to paint the whole universe left them no time to paint otherwise. Impressionism has been an essential of art from time immemorial. It is the expression of man's spiritual wealth, filling his destiny to overflowing.

Opposed stylistic attitudes were harmonized in Shakespeare, and he accommodated so many of them that it seems at times as if he were several authors in one. His prose is finished, polished. It is written by a comedian of genius, given to detail, a master of the secret of concision and the gift of imitating and reproducing everything curious and extraordinary in the world. In direct contrast is the realm of his blank verse. Its inward and outward chaos exasperated Voltaire and Tolstoy.

Verse was Shakespeare's quickest and most direct mode of

expression. He resorted to it as the speediest medium for recording his ideas; and this is carried to a pitch at times where one may recognize in his verse rough-sketches for prose. The strength of his poetry lies in its irresistible and scattering irregularities.

His rhythm is irrepressible and gusty. It lies at the root of all his utterance and serves as explanation and vindication of the words. Here on the one hand we touch the laconic element peculiar to English verse in its ideal iambic line (which embraces whole contrasts, and, thanks to this, is winged in statement); and on the other we recognize the rhythm of a free historical personality setting up for itself, in obedience to the second commandment, no brazen image, and remaining as a result straightforward and terse.

This rhythm is most easily seen in *Hamlet*. Here it has a treble purpose. It is used to characterize, it materializes in the sound of the tragedy's prevailing mood and maintains the basic themes throughout; it holds and smoothes over some of the cruder scenes.

The rhythmical characteristics are vivid and thrown into high relief. Polonius or the King, or Guildenstern and Rosencrantz speak in one way, while Laertes, Ophelia, Horatio and the rest speak in another way. The Queen's credulity is discerned not only by her words, but in her manner of speaking with a singsong voice and drawing out the vowels. Most striking of all, however, is the rhythmic definiteness of Hamlet himself. So great is it that we feel it to be concentrated in some imagined but actually non-existent rhythmic figure. The whole character of the man is caught in his brief lines: the pulse, almost palpable, of his entire person. Here we find the inconsistency of his movements, the long stride of his decided gait and the proud halfturn of his head. That is how the soliloquy thoughts leap and take flight; that is how he flings his haughty and derisive replies right and left to the courtiers, and how he strains his eyes into the distance of the unknown bourne from which his father's shade has called him once and may always speak again.

Thus, the music of *Hamlet* does not in general lend itself to quotation; we cannot extract isolated examples of the rhythm. But despite its impalpability its presence merges in a sinister and material way with the drama's whole web and is throughout in the key of the subject. It is to be found in the measured alternation of solemnity and anxiety. It thickens the atmosphere to the limit of

density, yet permits the principal mood to stand out all the more effectively. In what does that mood precisely consist?

Hamlet has long been talked about as a tragedy of will. But in what sense is this meant? Mere lack of will power was not of interest to the Elizabethans. Hamlet's character, drawn in such clear detail, cannot be reconciled with the conception of weak nerves. Shakespeare presents him as a prince of the blood, who never for a moment forgets his right to the throne, a spoiled darling of the old court and a rough-diamond who because of his unusual gifts is self-opiniated. In the combination of features with which he is endowed there is no suggestion of flabbiness; all the features exclude it. On the contrary, the audience are left to judge how great must be the range of Hamlet's plans and desires if they are to judge correctly the scale of his sacrifices. From the moment the ghost appears, Hamlet denies himself, to do the will of the other. *Hamlet* is not a drama of weakwill but of duty and self-abnegation. When it is discovered that appearances and reality are irreconcilable, that there is a gulf between them, it is of no import that the reminder of the falsity of the world comes in supernatural form and that a Ghost calls for revenge. What matters is that Hamlet has chanced to be chosen as the judge of his own time and the servant of a time more distant. *Hamlet* is a drama of the high destiny, the tragedy of a vocation.

I have said that rhythm has a softening effect on a certain angularity in the play, which would be unthinkable outside the circle of its harmony. Here is an example.

In the scene where Hamlet tells Ophelia to go to a nunnery, he is speaking to a girl who loves him and whom he insults in the tone of the postbyronic braggart aping genius. His irony is not justified by his love, which he crushes down in pain. But see how this cruel scene is introduced. Before it comes the famous soliloquy: To be or not to be; and the first words that Hamlet and Ophelia exchange still hold echoes of its fading cadences. In the bitter beauty and confusion of the misunderstandings that burst from Hamlet, chase and jostle one another and pause, the soliloquy resembles the unexpected tentative trial chords of the organ which precede the requiem. The most deeply felt and frenzied lines ever written on the anguish of the unknown at the gates of death, they rise in strength of feeling to the sharp anguish of Gethsemane.

It is not an accident that the soliloquy preceded the ruthless

working-out; it goes first as the burial service goes before the burial. After it, whatever happens, all is redeemed, cleansed, and elevated, not only by the thoughts in the soliloquy, but also by the warmth and purity of the tears felt throughout it.

Shakespeare has no tragedy or comedy in a pure form; he works with a genre that is something in-between, a fusion. A genre more responsive to the truth of life, in which horrors and enchantments are also fused. The poet's tonal conformity to that truth was set to his special credit long ago by a remarkable critic, Dr. Johnson, and in more recent times by a remarkable poet, T. S. Eliot.

In the tragic and the comic Shakespeare saw more than the lofty and the common or everyday, the ideal and the real; he looked on them as rather like the major and minor in music. Putting his dramatic material in the desired order, he used the alternations of poetry and prose, and their transitions, as musical harmony.

Their alternations constitute the main distinction of Shakespeare's Drama, the soul of his theatre, that broadest of hidden rhythms of thought and mood which I have mentioned in my remarks on *Hamlet*. He resorted to such contrasts regularly. All his plays were written in the form of his frequently changing scenes, facetious or tragic; but in one set of instances he uses this method with unusual persistence. Thus, at the brink of Ophelia's freshly-dug grave the audience is drawn into loud laughter at the profundities of the gossiping grave-diggers. At the moment when Juliet's body is carried out, a boy from the servant's hall makes game of the musicians invited for the wedding, and they bargain with the old nurse who sees them out. Cleopatra's suicide is preceded by the appearance of an Egyptian halfwit with snakes, who makes inept comments on the uselessness of reptiles. . . .

The 19th century in Russia and Europe was called the Shakespearean or Hamlet Age because of the poet's immense influence upon it. That influence was disseminated gradually, and yielded different fruits at different moments. Shakespeare was the father and teacher of realism. His significance for Pushkin, Hugo, and so on, needs no pointing out. The German Romantics studied him; one of the Schlegels translated him and the other evolved from the plays his theory of Romantic Irony. Shakespeare was the forerunner of Goethe's symbolism in *Faust*, and the doctrine of the transformation of organic and creative form.

This aspect of his work makes all that stands for narrowness and triviality gnash its teeth and writhe at the elegiac solemnity of his finales. It removes to a greater distance the already very distant and inaccessible secret of the end and death. The respectful distance at which we stand on the threshold of the lofty and the formidable, is lengthened out. For the thinker and the artist final situations do not exist, they are always the one before the last. Shakespeare seems afraid that the audience may believe in the suspect unconditional basis and finality of the denouement. By interruptions in the tone towards the end he restores the endlessness that has been transgressed. In the spirit of all new art, as opposed to antiquity's fatalism, he merges the transitory and mortal nature of the sign in the immortality of significance. (1946).

Translated from the Russian by PETER MEADOWS.

Alick West

DEBATE AND COMEDY

(A note on the unresolved dissonance in Bernard Shaw's early plays)

ON THE ONE HAND, IN THESE PLAYS, THERE IS THE dreamer, the saint, the rebel; but the realist says that the saint is a sentimentalist and the rebel a romantic. On the other hand, there is the realist; but the saint, the rebel and the dreamer say that his realism is that of Bismarck's *Realpolitik*. They debate with one another without conclusion.

It is a common criticism, and a just one, though less just than it is common, that a Shaw play is like a debate. It becomes so because the dramatic conflict is not fought with naked weapons. In a way, it is a sham fight, for Shaw disarms his rebels. He never equips them with his own knowledge, and he imposes on the action the solution which his Fabianism demands. He degrades his rebels, as Sergius is degraded, in order to make easier the realist's victory over them. Sergius's Byronism remains mostly in

the stage directions; so does Morell's knowledge of Marx's *Capital*; so does Gloria's moral passion and the fervour of her belief in her mother's ideas; Tanner's scathing indictment of capitalism in *The Revolutionist's Handbook* is banished from the play to an appendix. What is dramatically most deeply stirring—the tension created in the final scene of *Arms and the Man* by the silent presence of Louka; the senseless waste of a life in *You Never Can Tell*, while the revellers dance; Morell, his socialism forgotten, kneeling in *Candida* to a sentimental prostitute as if she were the Virgin mother; the torturing defeat of the inarticulate rebel against capitalist injustice in that ironically named play *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*; the saint's realization of the futility of the saintliness which he yet clings to in *The Devil's Disciple*; Keegan listening to his fellow-countrymen laughing in hell—all this is muted. Nevertheless, the plays beneath the play are art, not debates. But they are like ghosts, that have not been allowed to enter a body.

For they would have rent the plays to pieces. There is a repressed revolutionary creative energy in Louka, in Gloria, in Brassbound, in the contrast between the saint's abstract idealism and Anderson charging at the head of the people's militia, in Keegan's biting satire on the blessings which English imperialism will bring to Ireland, in the fierce disgust at the socialist's abject surrender to Woman—an energy which makes one hate the self-complacent, comfortable, empty realism of the Bluntschlis, the Candidas, the Lady Cicely Waynfletes, the idiotic Broadbents. Yet these people are the victors, for Fabianism demands that they shall win. At the critical moment, therefore, Shaw stops his rebel fighting, and thereby annihilates his reality. Keegan ceases to be Keegan when he says he will vote for imperialism, and becomes an apology for Fabianism.

Shaw arranges the battle so that the realist may win. He halts and breaks the dramatic movement, and annihilates the dramatic tension, in order that the realist may win little victories. Because he is afraid of his defeat in the real conflict of the play, he turns the play into a debate, so that the realist may score points. Because he is afraid, he will do anything to get the reassurance of a laugh.

When Marchbanks cries out "Horror! horror! horror!" and bows his head on his hands, Burgess breaks in with "What! Got the 'orrors, Mr. Morchbanks! Oh, that's bad, at your age. You must leave it off grajally." Cæsar's address to the Sphinx ends with the

words, "Have I read your riddle, Sphinx?" Whereupon, Cleopatra peeps out and calls, "Old gentleman."

And one is glad of it; for the laughter relieves the embarrassment at Cæsar's poetry.

Shaw's comedy is as contradictory as the plays themselves. Often it has this sane, clear, gay quality: as in *Arms and the Man*, where Raina's sentimental romanticism is outraged, not by Bluntschli's "realism", which is only the same sentimental romanticism in another form, but by the ravenousness with which he eats her last three chocolate creams and turns up the box in case there may be one more; or in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, when Sir Howard offers to return to Brassbound his mother's estate, and Lady Cicely remarks that as the property now costs £150 a year to keep up instead of bringing in anything, it would not be of much use to him. In *You Never Can Tell*, Dolly's high spirits are so infectious that one cannot stop reading. In the stage directions, there are still more invisible laughs and smiles, necessarily lost in a performance, and a note of good-tempered satire in the description of the characters, like that in Shaw's dramatic criticisms, which gives to them a reality they do not always keep when they begin to talk and act. Very good is the description of M'Comas in *You Never Can Tell*:

He is about fifty, clean-shaven and close-cropped, with the corners of his mouth turned down purposely, as if he suspected them of wanting to turn up, and was determined not to let them have their way. He has large expansive ears, cod coloured eyes, and a brow kept resolutely wide open, as if, again, he had resolved in his youth to be truthful, magnanimous, and incorruptible, but had never succeeded in making that habit of mind automatic and unconscious.

And Shaw can make a room as living as a person, as in his description from the same play of Valentine's operating room with its wall paper "designed, with the taste of an undertaker, in festoons and urns; the carpet with its symmetrical plans of rich, cabbage nosegays."

Always in these introductory descriptions there is a friendliness towards the reader, a felicity of phrase (like Finch M'Comas's "large expansive ears" and those "rich, cabbage nosegays"), and sureness and directness of movement, which make one regret the novels Shaw did not write.

Much of Shaw's comedy, as he himself has said, uses the oldest

stock themes of comedy—for example, in *Arms and the Man*, all the confusions and complications with Major Petkoff's coat which Raina lent to Bluntschli and his incurably romantic disposition prompted him to return in person, and with the photograph of herself which Raina had slipped into one of the pockets; or Valentine betting his landlord his six weeks' arrears of rent that he will pull out his tooth without his feeling it, and then gassing him; or Lady Cicely telling Brassbound's men to bath the Cockney Drinkwater, who is carried off howling and appears, at the end of the critical scene between Brassbound and Lady Cicely, with his mouse-coloured hair a flaming red. Old and simple it may be, but it is always a new variation; and in its effortless exuberance it does not only repeat the old themes, but is alive with their vitality. Shaw's most perfect, though not his most expressive, work is in his short comic interludes, like *How He Lied to Her Husband*, which has the movement of the gayest, lightest music, with irresistible runs and bursts of absurdity made reasonable.

There is a philosophy in the comedy which contradicts the plays' more explicit philosophy. Dramatically, Tanner's marriage to Ann is convincing, not because he is in the grip of the Life Force (which, without the scene in Hell, means not much more to the spectator, if he derives his knowledge only from the play, than it does to Ann, who says that it sounds like the Life Guards), but because he is a comic figure. He is the rebel who thinks himself a rebel, but is not; the clever man who understands nothing; and the more he works himself up, the more he misfires. With pleased anticipation, the audience watch the woman stalk her prey, knowing in advance that the spider, the bee, the marked down victim may career all across Europe in his thousand-pound car, but he will not escape. In his final speech, Tanner may proclaim the cosmic purpose of his marriage and his bold determination to be married in a registry office and sell all the wedding presents to pay for the distribution of *The Revolutionist's Handbook*; but he is let down again.

ANN (looking at him with fond pride and caressing his arm) . . .

Go on talking.

TANNER *Talking!* (Universal laughter.)

The dramatic action makes Tanner and his Life Forces equally comic. And because in a performance of a Shaw play all that is expressed only through the stage directions—namely, the heart of the dramatic conflict—is lost, this comedy is very important.

But it also makes *The Revolutionists' Handbook* comic, as well as the Life Force; and when one remembers what was in *The Revolutionist's Handbook*, the laughter turns sour. For it serves the purpose, like Burgess's comic Cockney, of slurring over the class issue in the plays and facilitating an easy victory for the Bluntschlis over Sergius. Consequently, there is a certain falseness in the "good fellowship" which Shaw said, in the passage quoted earlier from the introduction to his collected *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, it was the function of comedy to create. His comedy also must serve his Fabianism; and therefore Shaw will not give full freedom to his comic vision, because he will not fully trust in the people. Just as the plays are haunted by voices which never speak out, so the popular comedy, not the Burgess class-collaboration comedy, never finds a voice or a character to say all that it means. What it does mean, is the opposite of that mysticism that places the energy of life outside people themselves; for the comedy springs entirely from the relations and the actions of the people themselves—both on the stage and in the audience, since the awakened pleasure of the audience contributes its momentum to the action. But Shaw, still holding to his Fabianism, suddenly becomes serious, and tells himself that power is not in the people, but in the individual and in the mystic principle by which the individual flatters himself he is possessed, in the realist and his Platonic-Bismarckian reality.

The saint remains outside the comedy. There is a continual disturbing, embarrassing change of key as the action moves between the plane of comedy and the plane of the saint. There are two different levels of life, the earth of laughing people, the heaven of solitary dreams. The earthly key is so distant from the heavenly that the comedy seems almost clowning, and Shaw almost a clown against his will. There is the same metaphysical separation of the mysticism from the comedy and of the saint from the clown as separates the Life Force from real action. The same distance separates also the saint from the audience: around the figure of Keegan is thrown a kind of glamour from another world; his holiness is not for the audience, living in the ordinary world and, unlike Keegan, at home in it; the play's message for them is that they must be "practical realists."

Paul Eluard

FROM THE HORIZON OF ONE MAN TO THE HORIZON OF ALL

AFTER UTTER ABANDONMENT, WHEN THERE WAS NOTHING left in his depths but the vision of his dead wife, he was shaken by a great revolt.

ROCK IN WATER

*Like a bird upright in an armature
The wind's head caught inside a shadowy cage
like an erect sword in a net ensnared
like an immense love all unshared
Yes I said and it's not the winner I said
and home to me each image comes ashamed
I am no coward and in jail I'm laired
in making love I loved a woman dead.*

Stupidly, he felt himself the victim of an injustice. Without dreaming that death had always haunted him, and not his own death but that which lies in the depth of all beings, for they make of it an image they need, a springboard projecting them out of childhood and out of old age towards the balanced bar of a measured and fecund life.

*which fly of her life
is mother of the flies of her death.*

Inverted movement of normal time, going as far as the obdurate desire to endure still. He felt himself a victim, stupidly, a victim of time rolled by and time to come.

EGOLIOS

*still I hear the voice
It's there that you will love
always always and always
Confess you never once foresaw this moment
which comes immortalizing you*

*You'll never manage to escape yourself you dream
think if you can of a time devoid of love
Explain if you can why it's this face
and not another face which halts before you*

*Still I hear the voice
Stay loving loving
and you will fell yourself become an oak
and all the wood will be your shadow
birds and stars will perch upon your head
The only sleep for you a different sleep
and eyes that never sleep will watch in yours
A madman you'll be at the thought of happiness:
you'll take in your arms the boughs of sunlight*

*Now I hear the voice
All that it hasn't said
all that I couldn't be expected to suspect
Around me I hear the circle of silence closing
A madman you'll be at the thought of unhappiness
like a ditch within a desert
Like a sick man left to die
because he's hoped too greatly
You also may come to lie as a dead man lies
alive you'll know the worms consuming you
up to the point where sense is ended
up to the longed-for absence of all secrets.*

Till this time he had lived without wickedness. He became wicked. When he wanted to cry, and he wanted to cry nearly all the time, he felt himself the ridiculous and absurd firstcomer, he who was in fact the lastcomer, at the stage of provoked heart-break. Then he heaped angers and perfidies on *those who loved him*. He didn't want the least shred of love.

SONG OF THE LAST DELAY

*Black is my name when I awake
black is the monkey pestering me
who makes grimaces crazing faces
before the mirror of my night
black is my burden of unreason
it is my cold and festering half*

Black where the arrow-shaft gets home
black where the brand has won its way
black the sweet and blasted body
black the pure heart of my love
black the rage with hair gone white
and with the fallen dribbling mouth
The mad desire to scream will end
only with my failing voice
only on my gravebed's charms
where my accomplices will weep
all those who smiled on me for loving
and now would like to feast my grief
I was knitted with hands together
doubled with two hands in my own
I was knitted with two eyes
which used my eyes to gain their sight
but here today I feel my bones
crack beneath the absolute cold
I feel the whole world fading out
nothing remains of all our laughter
of all our nights or all our dreams
and now the dews are scattered ashes
I've wept until the shell is empty
where we'd no choice but being two
O turn aside then from my sorrow
straight from the dust it comes to me
and every sacrifice it denies
Death is never virtuous
O turn aside if still you feel
the wish to live unknowing death
Under your eyelids withering
and in the mud of your desires
black a zero will spread around
a zero tiny and enormous
capable of grasping at last
wholly the sovran part of man
Black's Me alone but you be clearer

Once he went so far as to wish that those who loved him should in their turn experience his heartbreak. He took revenge for existing. And he was almost happy in hating himself so deeply.

He burned, and his ashes saved him from collapse. Night he found a pretence of death. In it he lay down, caressed and perverted himself.

Those who loved him entwined their tresses, not their spirit with his madness. But he weighed their mouth in head-kisses, set against them an empty vessel, a dwarfish tenderness, an unlimited generosity, a pledge of suicide. And his strength was corrupted.

What would you have had him do, when the most substantial of the links which bound him to life had been broken?

SAID TO A DEAD WOMAN

*It's noon on earth for ever quite alone
on the town's site and in the regular life
reproducing every second
in a time that never passes
Noon against my solitude
noon on which I lean
on the open sky and the closed sky
on the desert and the town
Noon and we enter on infinity's orbit
you stretch your shadow and light within my flesh
like a bottomless oilflow like a definite wine
and the magnetic needle on you leaves no mark
And life's adventure and death's adventure both
are nailed at noon upon me in the dayfly
an adventure of error and I turn a void
like a child who dies at the instant of its advent*

Poor devil, he mistrusted the sincerity of *those who loved him*. Blood which is lost owns neither love nor law nor anything of the sort. His dried up at noon, November the twenty-eighth, 1946, a Thursday, this blood which seemed to him a cascade of gold. How should he still have good eyes, when the eyes and the eyelids which set the level of his days had dissolved?

Those who loved him tried to replant the tree. They rejoiced in sunlight, in sleeping and waking. One was innocence, and the other was the gift. Nothing changed between their eyes, nothing abased itself, nothing domineered.

As for him, he was dreaming in mid-earth, in mid-horror, in mid-absence, with his heart, with his dead woman, and the negative spectre became a spectre alive. His first loves were born again, throwing a veil of used-up flesh on the final ruin.

SETTING OUT FOR THE VOID

*Contemplate the slowed-down movements
of a whole man in the valley
of your hollowed body your heaped-up heart
The young girl naked
the misty half of the couple of the echo
answer to dawn and grass and tree
my youth and all our childhood's song
desire's saliva scenting my whole palace
my real face deepbathed in light
Contemplate and show yourself with all your past
like a clear star you singing in the bird
until tonight
the shadows of its flight and flowers of its wings
return to virgin rotting earth
we'll enter in the dark
Our future is forgotten
through death I've lived tomorrows
I see the young girl naked
without a vulnerable chink
the woman bared in the crude night
and the childing mother hopelessly wiped out
Who quiets me who maddens me is you
who then is strong and who is weak
under my eyelids when I sleep
save you who live no longer and possess me.*

Suddenly he began to delight in readymade expressions, in the meagre excuses of sloth: "I've had a bad blow on the head—I wouldn't want my worst enemy to suffer moral anguish—how can one believe in death?" As if he were talking objectively, he was talking to no purpose at all.

He added, taking his secret heaven for a lamp, that nothing remained of his life except what he'd have liked to say of it.

Those who loved him didn't accept this childish defeat. *Those who loved him*: one was wisdom, the other was beauty. They wanted a dual languor, a perfect echo, common reason. For those who have confidence in love have a limitless aversion from all grieving. They took exception to all the applied forms of his torment. They were there, holding out hands to his past happiness, his future happiness, even if he refused to admit any hope of happiness at all.

Obstinately they were there, maternally, to conserve life. Mountains, plains, forests, towns made them stand out simply in the sentient air. Their likeness was their cradle, and love their only science. They knew the words to pit against silence. They shared their hunger, their bread, their kisses and caresses, their pure brows and their certitude. Dividing all things, they reunited all. Their love could have left lonely only the indifferent one who closed himself in, who came to terms with the dust. *Those who loved him* fought against weariness, but how many times had they to give in! And yet they regulated time, naturally, time which goes by and comes back. They wasted nothing, they went on being renewed and being as they used to be. And days and nights were all one to them. And their lips kissed the scarlet lips of their lips—the greatest of all rising wings.

They were two, they multiplied. They marked out a road.

And as nothing evil is invincible, a consent grew up under their caresses. A faithful portrait lighted up the room of love, and the portrait of the dead.

PORTRAIT

*By twelve sweet things shall I confess your grace
first that of eating and of drinking
and of dreaming afterwards upon your lot
disorder always leading to good times
A smile takes shape within your flesh
like air calling deep within a mine
and all your memories are white caresses
you give yourself a smile and a caress
You're your own child you play at being mother
and start once more to play at making love
you're alone you think and see a double you
within one mirror see two mouths in one
Beauty my goodness both austere and puerile
light and warmth both seeing and being seen
who wants to love you now is born in dew
the earth is fattened on the heaven's milk
You lift your breasts towards the heart of others
your candid bosom shows without a cloud
you own no pride and no humility
and truth emerges from your naked body
Twelfth sweetness is your truth that's living still*

*and teaches me to live begetting hope
you're very patient and we'll go afar
hope is an ox who's furrowing a field
and it's a torch that's furrowing the view.*

The threatening winter tried in vain to crack his joints, and all the doubts of love hollowed out tombs in the cold, the lost body was once more found, and the happy times.

*Leave me to judge what helps to keep me living
my endless reason for more life
after utter abandonment
So strong this reason it's voluptuous
hope is so strong that it has cleared my brow
my indifferent brow that's knockt and leprous-gnawed
The upshot the eternal sight and contact
of objects which are not myself
reason for interest and reason for smiles
I am and am not in the mists
as thinking veers but both in snow and summer
I own a body and the others' body own its weight
I'm real all is real and if my mourning
breaks into reality with heavy axeblows
I live I'm as I was all dies I'm born anew
The memory which hurts me
has ruddy stays like iron in the fire
a rose in the red sunbeams of my sorrow.*

*First a body waiting for caresses
and then a kiss surprising
First a body which can't take
the place of the lost body
a body quite intact in homage
to the full life of tender flesh
In the clouds and in the waves
of this world where the heaven's moving
a body topping all the summits
and all the while beside me lying
In the scales of delicate touch
in my sombre embrace at will
can this body teach me living
when I have lost the one I love*

*Truth is a crystalline dimension
my hands could merge within the world
But I calculate my madness owning
the art of laughing out of duty
This belly hollowed with wet grass
is it the servant of the birds
or of itself it makes me drunk
is it the master of the seasons
This warming belly of July
or of December in its rigour
breaking lances still for faith
this belly feeble and obliging
delights me and by heart I know it
with luminous graces all its own
livelier than a fan of feathers
slower far than life and death*

*Knowing too much of it knowing lyric
voluptuousness of getting naked
showing both your breasts and pleasure
showing in your two silent eyes
Indifferent and divining sibyl
you wisely know my suffering
and yet your mouth won't utter it
but changes still its image here
and doesn't reproduce its kisses
except to soothe the universe
I beg you by my troubled nights
throw the bridge of your glances out.*

And, by the mediation of the senses, gradually solidarity was re-born. A man for friend, a woman for friend, and the world begins again, and shapeless matter again takes on a body. A straight line linked and passed through the breasts. Once more men are together, and the unhappy one started to smile afresh upon them, with a smile perhaps a little less pleasant than before, but a juster smile, a better smile. He began to imagine again what his brothers could be if they broke down their solitude. He heard the groundswell of the song rising from the compact crowd. He was no longer ashamed.

*They work for those they love
and it's a load of light caresses*

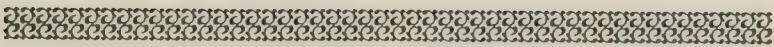
But they are working too for you
and all the ecstasies of love
won't cancel out this weariness
which brings them down from overwork
for you who've not a thing to do
I denounce injustice
and pull out all the thorns
I want to smooth the wrinkles out
I speak and the door opens
Then let me judge what helps to keep me living
I longed for freshness and consumed the fevers
snow under sunlight I am born of woman
sometimes I own her virtue
the gulf of her womb sets mankind free
Living is sharing solitude I hate
the strands of death still hold me back
and truly no one now I clasp as once I did
bread was a sign of all felicity
good bread which makes our kisses warmer yet
One shelter is possible the whole wide world
to live today for me is to unknot the riddles
and quite deny the blind despair of birth
in pure loss always star without a glint
to live to lose oneself that one may rediscover men.
Then let the river's pallor wipe the gutter out
and let the marvellous eyes see everything in place
misery effaced and all the glances in order
an order swelling with seed in flower and tree
a quickened structure shoring up the universe
The child renewed from man to man and laughing.

Those who loved him were legion. They were going to drink at the sources, they toiled against the effort lost in the shadow. Sorrow was overcome, the tree sprang out of the earth, its fruits would ripen, everyone would be nourished by them.

What have the pedlers of morals to do with all this? A man had been restored to his brothers, a rightful brother.

Leave me to judge what helps to keep me living
I render hope to men grown weary
despite the vigorous joys of love
They love and it's a crown

Translated by JACK LINDSAY.



Endre Illes

WINTER SUNLIGHT

THE YOUNG DOE AND HER FAWN LAY IN THE HAZEL copse, sunning themselves in the snow. "Look", cried Susan, catching my arm; but I too had seen them by then.

This strange sparkling winter-morning had begun about an hour and a half earlier, when we stepped out of the forest and halted on the dazzling slope of the Long Meadow. On the day before yesterday a north-easter had come blustering with a fall of snow. Yesterday the wind veered to the southwest, but the snow went on falling. Today there was nothing but light and lustre coming from east and west and north and south. It was like a windfall, a small legacy which, useless for ordinary purposes, had better be squandered at once. The light didn't come scattering from on high or stream towards us, a broad tranquil river. It was sharp, scintillating, vibrant, as though a thousand tiny bells were ringing over the face of the snow. As though the morning had gained a voice, so filled was it with minute bubbles of light which burst with a snap, with invisible whirlpools and votices humming in the air. And it was cold. A young hard sharptoothed frost which made our ears tingle and darted a fiery pain to the roots of our nails.

Love, that foolish constriction of the chest and upsetting furtive bittersweet flavour on the tongue, froze in this cold radiance. It grew thin and transparent and flimsy, something outside us which we trailed along like a broken wing; it neither raised us up nor pulled us down, but forced us to plod soberly through the luminous snow till we became bemused out of very sobriety.

On the slope we found a hare's prints, quite fresh; he must have passed that way less than two or three hours ago. Perhaps Susan's shotgun had conjured him out of the void. "Let's get him," I cried.

Excitedly, almost happily, we hurried along in the hare's wake, up the Long Meadow towards the ridge. In our thoughts we saw him loping round in careless security after perhaps visiting a dawn-orchard to nibble the young bark of a fruit tree and at a cabbage leaf found under the snow. He couldn't have gone far; he'd probably taken cover in the bushes or the forest close by.

We trudged on in silence, our feet sinking in the soft crunching snow. But soon we were brought up short. The prints, straight as a stretched cord up to that point, suddenly ended; they didn't go on in any direction at all. Had the hare lifted himself right up off the ground or melted into the beleaguering radiance? "Why not?" we asked each other gaily. Why shouldn't a miracle have happened? Why not assume he had picked up his own traces and now carried their thickening coil slung over his shoulder as he scampered along the end of the wood?

Our eyes met in a gleam of sly complicity. We were going to pretend that we were completely nonplussed. We looked and we looked, in ever-wider circles, in vain. Not a print anywhere.

"I say," said Susan suddenly, "this hare just turned round in his tracks." And so she gave the game away. We saw, we allowed ourselves to see, that that was in fact what the creature had done: run back in his own tracks, with great care, perhaps ten yards or so.

"Hush," we admonished each other. There was the spot from which he had leaped out of his tracks into the thicket. It must have been a tremendous jump. How far did it take him? Six yards, seven. He thought of course that by interrupting his tracks he'd mislead his hunters; so he'd made his leap and lain low, and now he was drowsing somewhere in the snowladen gorse, maybe quite near to where we stood. It was the accepted procedure; all hares did it. Was this all the wisdom that generations of foolish ancestors had handed down to them?

"Give him a hail."

She laughed in childish glee and sent a snowball hurtling into the thicket. No point in shooting such a fool. We left him and went on. Lower down the slope a flock of fieldfares was winging over the snow. Light was flooding the world as riotously as ever. I looked at the moving shadows of the birds, and they were so deeply blue, so real and definite and alive, that they almost seemed worth shooting at. This light was enough to make one believe in miracles. Wasn't it possible that if you shot the shadow, the bird

would fall dead beside it? But Susan wasn't in the mood to shoot anything. She preferred to throw snowballs. She pelted me mercilessly with the loose lumps that splintered at first like brittle stars and then melted into shreds like a swarm of white bees swallowed up by the sunlight.

Then this too came to an end, and we became calm. Half an hour before we needed to return home, and half a day before my train went. We strolled on, leaving the forest of white and the dazzling meadow behind us, and turned from the bridlepath into the road. Then it was that we saw the young doe and her fawn.

The little creature lay just like a dog, with forelegs folded under its belly and its head pillowed on the snow. But the mother was awake, enjoying with head erect the crackling quivering warmth. As we stood there, she slowly turned her head and gazed at us. And we gazed back at her. "Watch me hypnotize her," said Susan. About fifteen paces separated us from the little group: "I'll bind her fast and bring her to you, eh?"

She kept her eyes fixed on the doe. "Watch me," she repeated, and started edging forward over the snow-meadow.

The fawn was the first to jump up. It ran a few steps and let out a sad little bleat. The doe also rose, but more slowly, and without taking her eyes from Susan's. "Silly . . ." said Susan softly.

Did she say it, or did she rather chant it in a low warm voice with an odd tang all its own? Her reedy voice, which I always thought had a russet tinge. Hazel bushes might make the same sort of sound in early spring, or a redbrown goldfinch sweeping earthward with a whirr of wings. The doe hesitated, but did not move away. The fawn bleated again, in a thin childish treble. "Silly," said Susan, "don't be frightened."

Already she had approached five paces, walking slowly, lightly, almost as if she floated over the snow, and at every step she repeated her formula of enchantment, "Silly . . ." At last she reached the doe, and still it didn't move.

"I could stroke its head, but I won't."

Very carefully she offered the creature a handful of snow, and it licked her hand in a distrait kind of way. The fawn trembled, with eyes set on Susan. It wanted to bleat, but it didn't dare.

With sudden determination Susan patted the doe's neck. The doe turned its head a little to evade the caress, but didn't run away. Susan looked round at me. "You see."

For minutes I stood and watched the sight: the girl moving over the snow in the spelled winter sunlight. And I felt that now, if ever, I should have had at call the old strangling emotion, the fiery intoxication that lends you wings and faith instead of mere foolish bedazzlement, and which prevents your voice from being that of a stranger. For I felt a stranger in this glowing winter-scene, a stranger with a stranger's sanity.

"You're bursting with pride over your feat, aren't you?" I said. "But you were always good at this sort of thing. No one knows better how to approach somebody gently, very gently. And then? What happens afterwards? In a few moments we shall go away and this creature that you've bemused will stay here. It'll stay here with a belief that all human beings are as gentle and harmless. Do you know what sort of people come along this road? The people of that village over there. They'll catch the doe and skin her. And you'll be the one who taught her not to mind getting caught. Have you thought of that?"

The doe paid no attention to my voice. Already she was wholly Susan's. "What do you want me to do?" Susan asked.


"Teach her what human beings are. Hit her on the rump with your gun. Hit her hard, so she won't forget it. She must be taught her lesson."

"Are you serious?" asked Susan, No russet lights in her voice now. It was dark and sombre. How well I knew that sombre voice of hers and those darkened pupils.

"They pay quite a good sum for a pound of venison in the black market, And there's the pelt as well."

I did not need to go on. She raised her gun and struck a resounding blow on the doe's flank. The doe and her fawn shot away helter skelter. We two stayed where we were.

Translated from the Hungarian BY L.A.



John Mitchell

THE DAM

WORK HAD SHAPED BIBLEBACK EBERLINE IN ITS image. His eyes had no centres, his mouth everlastingly chewed and worried, his hands for all their tugging were soft, there was the hump that followed him like a shadow and which earned him his cruel name. He was the Straw, a kind of work to promote deformity. And it still went on. Bibleback came to limp. It happened on the job. He never took compensation.

In the plateshop at the grindstone bench worked a white-haired old man not much bigger than the deafened owl in the eaves above him. They were pals it was said drily, bird and man, and no doubt Christie pounded softer because of the sleeper up there, in a deft precise manner more marvellous because he had only one good hand. He did odd jobs at tin-smithing, repaired locomotive lamps from the round house, leaded up holes and cracks, and in his spare time sharpened tools. Mornings he swept the office and the shop. Though they grinned the men let Christie be; something about him transcended "respect" and they would have fought to preserve it, whatever it was. Only the older ones knew he was Bibleback's brother.

The two men never spoke.

When he was young Christie Eberline had been a riveter in the shipyard. Some of the driving was done by hand in those days and Christie had swung a hammer. They worked in pairs, grunting as they swung, sometimes they hummed and they even sang. He still hummed at the bench with nothing heavier in his hand than a soldering iron. Bibleback had been Christie's partner.

A "hand-gang" drove as one man, swinging on each other's heels as it were, in a rhythm that must not flaw. They knew even more about each other than they did about their wives, because an ill-

timed swing might mean a death spill off a scaffold or hurt of some kind.

When the shipyard closed down they went to work in the plate-shop. Riveting there was automatic and the partnership dissolved. One day Christie stopped his brother and said, "Liss—Bibleback had been christened Ulysses after President Grant"—hear you're going bossing." The younger brother said he guessed he was and his face, under Christie's look, began that quivering for which it grew noted in later years. "Needn't give me any jobs," said Christie and that was why Hauser, the foreman, was the only one to give him orders.

Earlier than that the brothers had seen their different natures. Already in the shipyard a flaw had shown. Liss's hammer slipped and Christie's left hand wouldn't grip again. Out of it had grown a primitive mistrust of Liss and all he was. Bibleback let it be known his silent brother was "queer." Christie's aversion for his straw-boss kin seemed thus explained.

He took to walking out at the noon-hour, along the railway tracks. One day he stood staring over the marsh towards the river and he stooped and heaved a piece of iron. He noticed that it landed on a slope at the top of which stood a sapling like a feather on a hat. Christie began flinging pieces of scrap iron up the slope as he passed. At first he'd done it without thought, as a young fellow does things just to try his strength. Later it became a habit.

The sapling grew to a tree and beneath it grew the scrap pile. The years went on. The Eberline brothers, unknown to each other, grew old.

Bibleback wasn't sure if his brother had a wife, kids, or even a home. No one knew. The old man disappeared at night into the anonymity beyond the factory fence, to reappear in the morning his lunch-pail under his arm. Sometimes the brothers entered the main gate together. Eberline would be driving his Dodge sedan, polished as a piano. There would be Christie stumbling over the track ties to keep out of the way.

Bibleback couldn't account for the pile of scrap iron out by the big cottonwood tree. Two or three tons of it were mysteriously heaped. He couldn't recall ever having ordered anything like that done; wouldn't be any sense to it. Puzzled, he decided they could use the scrap in the foundry. He put in an order for a steam-shovel to be sent out the tracks.

Christie, emptying spittoons in the office, saw the carbon of the order.

The old man went to his bench and started hammering softly on his little anvil. Briskly he sharpened the teeth of all the saws the men had left on his bench. He put points on drift-pins, spinning the emery-wheel till the sparks flew off like a comet. Christie then began tidying up his bench, his tools in their racks, the drawers cleaned out, the vice-screw oiled. He flung a dead field-mouse up for the owl. At the noon-hour he went to the back gate of the shop and stared in the direction of the marsh. Then he started walking.

Work had stamped him too. He shambled. His neck was held slightly to one side as if he stared at something. His legs and arms seemed to dangle as if hung from a gibbet that strained the whole frame. Or he'd been given a blow on the spine. Surely he was worse than ever today.

So Bibleback thought watching him.

It took Christie some while to get out to the "dam." That was what he called the pile of iron he had created. Early in its career he had discovered that a V-shaped piece of plate, the edges stamped in circles from the punch-machine, was wedged at the bottom of the heap, and it indeed dammed up the jagged miscellany of plateshop scraps through which grass and weeds sprouted. He knew how long that strip of metal had been there. It was marked with the old dies, from thirty years before.

Observing the motions of his brother, Bibleback thought Christie was getting old. Old enough for the junkheap. Might not live to see his pension. And Bibleback wondered if the old man had saved much, and if there was anyone to claim it. For after all they were kin. Suddenly Bibleback followed Christie out.

He was fooling at the pile Bibleback had ordered razed. The straw-boss wandered about at a distance, uneasy. Christie tugged at the wedge-shaped piece of metal. If the blame stuff dumped into the gully the shovel would never reach it. Bibleback saw how it lay.

For almost the first time in his life he couldn't give an order.

Old Christie knelt. Feverishly, with both hands, he sashayed back and forth on the jammed iron bit it would not come. Bibleback believed his brother was really mad.

"Hey, you'll be getting hurt!" Bibleback's face quivered. He

couldn't help himself, for he saw that Christie was in the gully right beneath the suspended dam. It was like it was built a-purpose, so that it was sure to come tumbling down once the wedge loosened. Things observed unconsciously occurred to the Straw as he stood there bayed, unable to come close to the man who was his brother. From the past came items that pieced together had meaning. Christie lugging bits of scrap metal. Christie talking to himself as he did it. Bibleback had thought it another foolish habit of the "queer" old man.

"Christie!"

Bibleback cautiously leaned forward to restrain his brother's heaving shoulder. The old man paid no attention. Bibleback's hand shook with the shoulder. The metal wedge moved a little. It gave and Christie turned with it as the metal began sliding with hardly a sound, sucking him in. Bibleback, panting as he held on to him, shouted. But, "Help me, Chris!" was what he said, and he too was being sucked. Christie hummed to himself, an old familiar tune, from a face that smiled indifferent. Sprockets, liners, bolts, shavings from the shears, bits from the punches, gleaned by the man who used to sweep the shop, all these came by. Each piece that had once been lugged there by old Christie Eberline, carried off with the persistent patience of an ant, returned to him now with all the deadly force of gravity.

Bibleback scrambled clear as the avalanche stopped. Only his foot had been caught. He tried to drag away from the pain. He knew the bone was broken, mashed, the jagged metal tore like myriad saws. Christie lay under the heap, only his face showing, a tuft of weeds nearby. His mouth moved stiffly. He was trying to talk.

"Was wearing out faster'n my clothes was, Liss," he whispered. No one would ever get anything more out of him. Bibleback had his hand on his leg feeling blood. He dragged himself a bit further, blinded by pain. But Christie was beyond feeling now.



Nikolai Tikhonov

RIDING TOGETHER

I WAS TRAVELLING ROUND TO STUDY THE *eilagi*, THE summer herding; with a particular eye to the lives of the chabans as they call the herdsmen in the south. After I'd talked my fill with the shepherds, looked at endless flocks, breathed campfire-smoke till my head swam, and been bitten by the fleas swarming in the felt-mats of the tents, I grew tired of the pastures and set off north over alpine meadows to rest awhile in the pleasant Samura Valley.

At first I travelled with a chaban who'd offered to guide me to the nearest aul; Later, we caught up with two riders; and next day all four of us went on together.

One of the riders was a stout elderly chap in a very shabby woollen jacket, like a hunter's coat, with big pockets. His cap was pulled well down and he looked very serious. Dark with sunburn, he had a bristly clipped moustache, not much to say, and a true highlander's seat on his horse. An irrigation-worker, named Terentyev, he'd travelled the length and breadth of the Caucasus, and he made the time pass quickly, explaining any odd thing we saw and adding bits out of his own experience to illustrate. Unless we galloped, and then his story was broken off.

The other one was young and merry-eyed, simply called Safar. A mountaineer, who'd taken to jacket and trousers tucked into high boots. A light-hearted lad, full of brags about his wonderful dapple-grey—except when he remembered how he'd failed to qualify as a metallurgist and had to become a vet instead, and then he frowned and looked distraught.

At a halt we collected a fifth traveller, a tired-out unshaven militia-man returning from a hunt over the winter-pasture for a horse stolen from a collective-farmer. The hunt had ended in becoming a complicated matter, and he himself had caught a cold

and felt bad. His talk was made up of a curse now and then against the tricky horse-thief, finishing in a cough. For the rest he smoked cigarettes and silently flicked his whip at the flies round the huge head of his thin gelding, as he rode on, sunk in official thoughts.

The alpine pastures now seemed skyhigh. The grass varied in height, sometimes a few inches, then up to the horse's knees, then right up over our heads, taller than the reach of our arms. The pastures smelt extraordinarily good, and the heat of the sun was tempered by breezes from the snow-peaks not so far off.

After a few hours we reached a well-trodden path leading into a lovely valley. We walked our horses between green slopes that swept up to the debris of fallen rocks where the mountain began. Above, hung the red and yellow cliffs, carved into surprising forms where the play of light and shade on the ragged surfaces brought out in profile some marvellously beautiful or hideously ugly face, a monstrous animal or a giant or a friend. You could find any of your thoughts echoed in this comedy of stone-masks which mocked your imagination with the most grotesque patterns. The eye was ready to go on with this game for hours, so endlessly striking the changes. The rosy rocks, with their warm fleshtint, outlined against the blue sky, hovered aloft, phantoms startlingly alive, as though you were entering a realm of nature you'd never expected to see, stranger and lovelier than the familiar world to which you'd grown indifferent.

Soft swinging shadows went on floating over the green stretch of grass, and drifted along to the place where the meadow subsided and the river glistened below without a sound. I felt myself in the grip of that excitement, which no words can explain, which comes over you when you seize a pen and start off scribbling verse without knowing why. Above me was the burning blue of day, the topless dome of the heavens, the snow-thatched crags, measureless depths; and suddenly a line of verse leaped through my mind, a line that seemed to have no relation to the scene. As though it were whispered in my ear, a memory, a call from something in the far very-far past.

When the day's work is done at last . . .

When the day's work is done at last . . .

When the day's work is done at last . . .

It haunted me. I kept repeating it, mechanically, under my

breath. My horse was walking, tossing his mane. Through the ring of stirrups the creaks of the saddle, the snorts of the horse, another line broke in, unconnected with the first.

And hear the curfewshot without you . . .

But no shots were heard. Everything was at peace in the friendly valley, and only those two lines beat through my head, as if they'd flown down from the clifftops or come up out of the glittering river and the heady meadow-smell. I didn't know who'd written them, or what link there was between them; I felt a need for movement, furious desperate movement, breathcatching. I struck my horse with the whip, and he swung forward in a gallop, champing the bit, with ears laid back. Then, before I could fill my lungs and hear the air whistling past my ears, another horse's head ranged up beside me, snorting, eyes distended. Safar.

I looked round. Terentyev and the shepherd were galloping after us, and even the militia-man's nag, impelled by memories of the past, was tearing along as fast as it could. Mountain-horses can't bear another animal getting ahead of them. We galloped on, drunk with the speed. The horses' flanks were moist; their breathing laboured. I was leaning over my horses' neck, with my knees gripping his hot sides, and ahead, as though etched on the air, flew the lines I kept whispering through dry lips: When the day's work is done at last, and hear the curfewshot without you. . . . They merged with the rhythm of the gallop and somehow seemed to be speeding it up. On the right the fantastic cliffs swung by, rushing up and then falling back.

At last we brought our horses to a trot, and rode for a few minutes in silence. The cavalcade closed up again. My queer thrill of agitation had been blown away in the gallop-wind.

"What's the sense of racing like that?" asked Terentyev in reproof wiping his brow with a big blue handkerchief. "Pushing the horses for no reason. . . . Just like you, Safar," he ended politely, for he must have seen that I'd started the thing.

Safar spat, scratched his wide brow with his whip, and laughed, "You're old. Your blood stopped running. What's the use of trying to tell you? You're too practical."

I listened with only half an ear, trying to remember who had written those lines: *And hear the curfewshot without you, when the day's work is done at last.* . . . The riders were talking in Lezghin. The chaban guffawed, throwing himself back in the

saddle. Safar laughed complacently, and even the militia-man smiled faintly. I heard a name repeated by the chaban; something like Aishe, Aishe, but I wasn't sure.

"Now take Safar," said Terentyev, puffing at his pipe with the cherrywood mouthpiece. "A reckless lad, could break his neck in a twinkling, before you could see what was what. I've known him since he was a boy. I've been all over these mountains. . . ."

I interrupted to ask who Aishe was. He gave me a surprised look, listened a moment to the others, then answered:

"The chaban's teasing Safar about a girl in the aul we're going to, Aishe. She's eating her heart out for him, won't look at anyone else. But his mother betrothed him to cross-eyed wench in Miskinji, and he strays about like a wild goat, just as he fancies. They're telling a story about him, it's untranslatable. . . ."

Evening was near as we reached the aul. But the weather, always capricious in the mountains, had changed so suddenly that instead of the aul we saw only a dense fleecy cloud shrouding the houses. We couldn't make out a thing; it was like riding through milk. Here and there, the pillars of the big broad balconies loomed up out of the mist, roof-corners, stone walls; and then vanished again.

"I'm visiting a chap I know," said Terentyev, "but I'll see you at the school. I think we'll be sleeping there."

Our horses were walking, heads sunk, sniffing at the ground before they put their hooves down. At moments the mist thinned; and all of a sudden I saw a queer figure in an open space below, by a logpile. The head was wrapped in a shawl with fringe hanging over the belt; a sort of waistcoat covered the torso; narrow-ankled trousers were on the legs, like padded Red-Army trousers. The thing itself was smoking a long thin pipe that almost reached the ground. "What's that?" I asked Safar.

He turned his head. "That? a woman. They all dress like that here. More convenient, you know. These parts are always cold, a foul climate altogether."

A fresh wave of mist came up over us, raw, sticky, most unpleasant. The horses went up and up, along a narrow street; we had to watch out not to bang our heads on jutting corners and low balconies. Then at last we came into a sort of square, where a gust of wind folded up the mist like a curtain. I involuntarily reined in my horse, and so did Safar. Right before me stood a girl, leaning on the railing of the balcony that went all round the house. The

sight should have been usual enough; but here in the mist, in a remote aul, between cloud and snow, a very slender young girl, so strangely lovely that I stopped and stared, was standing on a balcony with her eyes fixed up on us. So close that I could have touched her feet with my whip. A pale translucent face, untouched by the sun, with delicate slightly-frowning brows and an indifferent yet imperious expression in her eyes: she made such a contrast with her surroundings that I was dumbfounded and could only stammer like a fool. She wore a simple grey dress with a fluffy shawl over her shoulders, a broad broad belt, and cheap low-heeled shoes. At last I pulled myself together.

"How beautiful you are? Where have you come from?"

"I just came, and what of it?" she answered without a trace of warmth in her voice.

"But where from?"

"Too far to see from here."

"And what's your name?"

"Why should I tell you? It means nothing to you."

"You've come to live up here?"

"Why not? It's cold here. I like the cold. I'm cold myself."

"Have you any idea what winters here are like? Everyone goes down into Azerbaijan, and the snow covers everything. Only the old men and the children stay under it, and the women weaving carpets. No escape till the spring."

She gave a sudden smile, and a little warmth stained her cheeks. Her eyes laughed at me. "I don't care. People live here, and we'll live here too."

"What's your job here?"

Her face lowered, and her voice was almost angry. "Nothing. I sleep with my husband . . ."

"Well, I see you don't mind frankness."

"That's the way I'm made. What are you hanging about here for? I didn't come out to welcome you in. Off on your business."

"Tell us how to find the school."

"The school?" She turned and pointed, and I turned my horse in the direction of her finger and looked at Safar. With knitted brows he was staring at the unknown woman, never taking his eyes off her. Not a sign was left of the gay bragger. She pointed up the street without deigning to give him a look. "That way. You'll see a stone wall. Then higher up, to the right. That's the school."

I touched Safar's horse with my whip; it started and walked on. The girl gave a loud laugh, and Safar seemed to wake up. He straightened his cap, jammed it down on his head, and gave his dapple-grey such a stroke with his whip that it reared. We went on through the mist, and all I could see in my thoughts was the girl's house with its balcony and carved pillars.

The school was cold and empty. In one classroom the desks had been dragged to one side, and two girls sat on the floor with legs drawn up under them, huddling beneath thin blankets, while a slim lad in a sort of cowboy shirt was struggling with a primus that produced only a thin line of blue smoke. A tall lean mountain-woman stood silent before us, dressed just like the queer figure I had seen by the logpile. Now that I could see the costume better, I rather liked it. Yes, green quilted Red-Army trousers ending in heavy black men's-boots; a white blouse, and over it a blue velvet waistcoat sewn with a whole fortune of big ancient silver coins; and a fringed shawl drawn in round the waist. But no pipe.

She was watching unconcernedly the girls shivering under their thin blankets and the lad trying to revive the primus: a bronze and silent statue that nothing could animate. Then she saw Safar, and at once her brown face lighted up, she opened her eyes wide, she threw up her hands and ran to him. She seized his arm and poured out a torrent of words, clearly a most moving appeal; but he pushed her hands away impatiently, almost roughly and contemptuously. Seeing his hardened face, she said something in pitiful tones, shivered, and turned to the window, there she stood with her back to us, her shoulders heaving, and stared out into the mist which was steadily thickening.

"Are you mountain-climbers?" I asked the lad, who had given up the primus and was wiping his hands on a piece of rag.

The girls laughed with chattering teeth. "We're anything you like. We're geologists. Today we got stuck on the glacier, and now nothing'll make us warm. We got into the snow. Mishka and Yuri are still there, on the other sector. And that rotten primus won't work." One of them pointed to the mountain-woman. "We asked here where she could get some woollen cloaks, burkas, but she doesn't understand Russian."

At that moment Terentyev and the chaban burst in, with a mountaineer whom Terentyev called Akhmet.

"Look here," I said, "you know the ropes. Why must these

youngsters freeze. Can't you get them some sort of burka or rug?"

Terentyev spoke to Akhmet in Lezghin, and Akhmet called, "Aishi!"

She turned back with arms folded, listened to Akhmet, and then went out without a word or a glance round. Terentyev squatted down by the primus, cleared it with a needle, blew on it, shook it, and it started roaring and blazing at once. "I'm a jack-of-all-trades," he said gaily. "These things treat me with respect. I wouldn't like to count all the primuses I've got going." Aishe came back pulling two burkas and a grey felt mat; and the girls ran for them with cries of triumph. As they rose I saw they were small, slender, nimble. A black-spouted kettle already stood on the primus, and the room looked a bit more cosy, though I myself felt that heavy snow might fall at any moment. The mist was so thick and chilly.

"We're going to Akhmet's," said Terentyev. "As for you youngster if you need anything, you know where to find me. Glad that Safar's come, Aishe?" he abruptly asked the girl of bronze who once more stood a sentry by the window. He repeated the words in Lexghin; she pressed her lips together, gave him a long unhappy look, and went out again. "What do you make of that?" Terentyev threw out his hands. "We brought her a visitor, and she isn't pleased. What have you been up to now, Safar? Lord, what a black look. The man's a wet-blanket, and so is she. A nice mess, I must say. Never mind, it'll clear up. These things happen."

Safar ejaculated something in Lezghin, and all three laughed. I realized that he'd thrown the matter off with a bawdy joke.

We left the school, while boys led our horses off; and went up into another street, almost blinded by the fog. "Watch your step," Terentyev kept saying. "All sorts of things to fall over."

"Who's the Russian girl? We met her coming in."

"Russian? They're geologists. That's who you mean, isn't it?"

"No, she was on a balcony, in a grey dress and shawl, a stranger."

"Ah, I know. A book-keeper came a while back to work for the carpet-co-operative. After big money, but won't find it so easy here. That must be his wife, obviously. Attractive piece?"

"I don't know your taste. I thought her remarkably good looking."

"O ho," he drawled. "If that's so, she's got a bad time ahead, unless she clears off to Akhta. It's not so far off. But what's up with Safar?" Just then I stumbled and hurt my foot. "Careful, for heaven's sake, or you'll break your leg. God, it's as black as the devil's stovepipe. It goes on like this for weeks on end here at times. A deadly place, but the meadows are fine. Thousands of sheep in the collective farm. But why is Safar so quiet?"

"Don't know. Maybe, he's thinking of his betrothed."

"His betrothed. They'll have to drag him to her with a rope. He obeys his mother all right—they still have a matriarchal system here—but not as much as all that. Though it's girls he's got on his mind, that's certain."

By the time we reached Akhmet's house, it was pitch dark. All I could see was the steps up to the balcony. We went cautiously up and came into a big room that gave me some idea about the size of the whole house. Once inside, I must admit that I lay down on a rug and went to sleep. Not for long, however. Terentyev politely shook me awake.

"All night for sleeping. There's a grand khinkal waiting for us. Come on."

We went into the living room. On the walls were hung old plates and dishes, weapons, two dairy-farming posters, an oleograph of Susanna and the Elders; and in a corner, in a frame, a wonderful collection of coloured postcards which at first I hardly noticed. Separately, in a place of honour, hung small portraits of the country's leaders. I went over to the tall balcony-window, but only the darkening fog was to be seen. Then, crossing the room, I examined the postcards. Mountain folk are very fond of such things in their living-rooms, family-portraits, placards, reproductions, oleographs, cheap popular prints. Here I found many view of towns, sea and mountain country. Heads of women with prerevolutionary coiffures, many portraits mostly of people I did not know but including a few well-known writers, composers, soldiers. I wondered what common factor brought them all, together in the one frame; but Akhmet, who spoke a little Russian touched my shoulder.

"All beautiful person."

I realized that this "all beautiful person" was the principle of their selection by the masters of the house. My eye lighted on a postcard-face of Lermontov at the same moment as Akhmet said

"beautiful person", and a thrill ran through me. The lines which had haunted me all day—And hear the curfewshot without you, when the day's work is done at last—were lines from one of his poems. Of course. I tried to recall the whole poem, but at that moment the food was brought in and I was asked to take my seat on the carpet in the spacious middle of the room. Terentyev with his unbuttoned jacket looked like an ancient Caucasian warrior; and beside him sat Safar, still with a distracted frown, and relatives of the host, middleaged mountaineers. Also my guide, the chaban, and a freckled unshaven Russian of uncertain age and limp movements, whom the mountaineers called Stepan and disregarded.

"He's the book-keeper come to make his fortune," said Terentyev in reply to my whisper. "Look at the fat he's put on. Now he's goggling at the khinkal, or is it the vodka?" he ended benignly.

The garlic sauce was thick, hot, strong. Vodka was drunk out of overfilled tumblers; but the highlanders are tough, and the drinking hadn't the least effect on them. The women only brought the food and drink in, and then modestly retired to let the men get on with the ceremonies of khinkal-eating. We all duly smacked our lips, ate with our fingers, and wiped our hands on napkins. The bilingual conversation was slow. This was the leisure hour. Here, on the heights, the complicated art of the Georgian toast was unknown. The toasts were more serious, jesting, coarse; but always short and simple. But after a while the vodka brought relaxation and the men started on humorous stories. As for myself I mused, thinking over Lermontov's lines. The vodka seemed to stimulate my memory, which was filled with images of flocks and herdsman; and after an hour I dredged up another line. But that was all.

The men were now bawling and roaring out local jokes, when the balcony door opened, and in came the girl who had startled Safar and myself. A paraffin lamp hung from a hook, and in its light, standing in the doorway, she looked like an unearthly visitant. A wisp of mist had drifted in after her; and as the lamplight caught its tiny particles she stood haloed in a heavenly sparkling nimbus, unmoving, looking us all over from head to foot. She was now wearing a blue blouse and white skirt.

"Good evening, Natasha," said Akhmet.

Natasha, I thought, and called to her, "Sit down, Natasha.

We already know one another. Come over here."

But she kept her eyes on her husband, who was sitting in his shirt sleeves, with thin tousled hair. A trickle of fat ran down his arm, and he was drinking from his tumbler of vodka as if it were tea. "Come on home, do you mean to sit here till morning?" she said in a harsh irritated voice. "And then go to sleep in a ditch?"

Stepan gave her an indifferent glance, drained his glass, took up a maize-ball, and stuffed it into his mouth. "What'll I do at home?" he asked, chewing slowly. "I'm sick of it, quite sick of it."

Without a word she turned to the door; but Akhmet, who was quick and light in his movements despite his dour heavy build, jumped up from the carpet. "Natasha, don't be angry," he said with warm good feeling, and took her hand politely in his. "Sit down with us and drink our health. Please."

And she did sit down, tucking her legs up under her like the mountaineers. She half-filled a glass with vodka and then coloured it with the cherry-juice that we'd ignored. As she tossed it off, her eyes met the fixed, intense eyes of Safar—the eyes of a man possessed; and something like a smile flickered on her lips. She picked up a maize-ball and bravely dipped it in the garlic sauce.

Now the highlanders were singing an old Lezghin song. Singing, they swayed as if in the saddle; and though I understood none of the words, the rhythm of the drawn-out melancholy highpitched song conjured up before me that valley where the river swirls in foam, where the landslides rattle down, where horsemen once gathered for a raid, where they fought and they died. A wildly beautiful song. Terentyev translated the words, but I'd already sensed most of the meaning, except that I was wrong about the battle-deaths. The highlander of the song could find no death however he sought it; he was enchanted.

After this song came a merry catch, and then more drinking and scattered talk. "Natasha," I said, "sing something of ours, something Russian."

"I can't sing," she said, simply and quietly. "I mean it, I'm not just pretending. I've no voice. But what about you?"

And carried away by her smile, I did something extraordinary. I said, "All right, I'll sing, but it's a poem."

The highlanders applauded to a man, and I chanted the verses of Lermontov which had given me no peace all day. I chanted in a desperately strained voice, hoarse with vodka and campfire-smoke,

To call it a song would be a lie; I croaked in a sort of harsh recitative, and as I went on, I felt as if the whole essence of this marvellous confused mountain-day entered into the lines which in no way were linked with the time and the place. I chanted the lines like a romance, repeating the third and fourth line of each stanza:

*When the day's work is done at last,
How often do I dream about you.
By the lone sea I wander past
And hear the curfewshot without you.
When the dull echo booms again
From the grey waters back to me,
I weep, grown weary with my pain,
And yearn to drown within the sea.*

I ended with eyes closed and felt myself ridiculous. But the expected clap of laughter did not come. "That's a good song too!" said Akhmet, and the highlanders all drank my health.

Natasha was staring at the carpet as if tracing out its pattern. Then Safar jumped up and walked to the far corner of the room with what seemed a drunken step. His swaying movement, however, was the prelude to the Lezghinka, the stealthy supple steps that merge into the dance. Suddenly he straightened as though a spring had been released, and moved round the circle looking as I could never have imagined him to look, a strong comely man quite unlike the ordinary rather-limited youth of the day. He danced as if he were the first man to dance the Lezghinka. As though he were telling his innermost, most secret thoughts. His movements were not those of a man dancing to amuse others; not those of a skilled dancer displaying his art for surprise and admiration. His dance was that of the primeval highlander telling in movement something for which he had no words. The on-lookers smacked their lips in excited delight, while their palms beat the rhythm like cymbals of metal.

He moved so lightly, so skilfully, that the lamp never trembled when he was under it. Perhaps I had drunk too much, but his dance held me in a spell. While his legs were telling their tale, nobody took their eyes off him. And so nobody saw when it was that Natasha stood up, at the outset or during the last frantic whirls. But when Safar came to a sudden stop, catching his breath and holding out his hand to the door, we saw that she already had hold of the handle.

"It's too stuffy here," she said in the hush. But she didn't go out. She stood in front of Safar, gripping the handle as if she meant to break it off.

"Natasha," he said, with a step towards her. "Dance with me. I'll remember it all my life."

For some reason she looked at the window, then she replied sharply, "I can't. Better for me to teach you our way."

"All right," he cried.

"But not now. Everything off so quickly with you. Like taking a jump in the river. Look out or you'll drown."

A cloud of mist bellied into the room and hid her. Safar rushed out in pursuit, but the bang of the door told us she was gone. Mist-curles floated slowly round the room. The highlanders began a song so melancholy that it sent shivers down my spine. Safar poured out a tumblerful of vodka and drank off it like water. I don't know how much time passed as I sat smoking my pipe, watching the faces change under the flickering lights and shadows of the lamp. Suddenly I felt everything quiet and friendly, and the room was warm, comfortable, homely. Safar rose and went out on to the balcony. Terentyev quickly followed him. Now, I thought, the most interesting part was coming. The highlanders were smoking cigarettes, and Stepan sat leant against the wall, his forehead white as snow against the red and black of the rug. Sweat-drops glistened on his temples. I went to the window by the door. Terentyev and Safar were talking in loud voices, interrupting one another, as if they were alone in the aul. As they talked, they walked up and down, so that their words were near one moment, then far off, and I could catch only odd sentences.

"You must go at once," said Terentyev, "I promised your dead father to look after you."

Then after a blur of words I heard again: "You're always the same. What about your mother? and your betrothed in Muskinji?"

Then he changed into Lexghin. Safar answered with heat, and ended in Russian curses: "To the devil with my betrothed."

They halted at the stairhead, and Terentyev repeated stubborn in a dull heavy voice, "At once. I'll saddle your horse. He's here in the yard. You must go."

A ponderous pause. Then Safar replied in a desperate tone that made my flesh shrug all over. "It's no use. I can't leave her. If I die for it. I can't." And then once more he was talking in Lexghin.

Terentyev was silent for a moment, then he spoke again, and his voice was muffled, fading away. Possibly he was talking to Safar as they went down the stairs. I couldn't distinguish anything further. Looking out of the window, for some reason I now saw the yard suffused with a greenish light as though at sea-bottom. I heard the ring of bit and bridle. Both men were at work saddling the horse. Then came a scraping of stones, a horseman's shadow crossed the yard, and the beat of hooves throbbed away into the distance. Could they both have gone? I thought; but at the same moment the door opened, and Terentyev entered the room and its wreathing smoke-spirals.

He came straight to me, ignoring the highlanders. One of them was dozing, another whispering to Askhmet; the chaban was trying to read a paper, lifting it up over his head to catch the weak light of the smoky lamp. Terentyev smelt of vodka and tobacco. His blue eyes held a gleam of scornful wisdom, as if to assure me that he knew everything about life, had seen everything, and could no longer be surprised at anything.

"What a dyushyush," he said; and seeing my blank look, he hastily added, "I forgot you don't know the language. I meant, what a lot of trouble." He paused and then went on, "Well, I've got him out of harm's way. Let him gallop off. The tracks are hard-going and he'll have time to cool down. But what is it you're thinking?" He spoke as if I'd contradicted him, "He's a good lad I'm very fond of him, but he's had bad luck. Wanted to be a metallurgist and made into a vet. Still, he oughtn't to drink. As for that woman, you're right, she's a devil and that's all. Well, we've made fools of ourselves too in our time. Young blood, I tell you . . . on a night like this, I . . ." He waved his hand and left me, stepping carefully over the legs of the sleepers, and began trimming the lamp wick.

I looked at the remnants of our dinner, the cloth spread out on the carpet littered with bits of broken maize-breads, meat, overturned glasses. I went over to the wall where the red dolmen of a lieutenant of Hussars could be faintly glimpsed in a glazed frame; and looked at the gold braid, the crudely tinted features. "Beautiful person," the highlander had said. Suddenly I couldn't stay any longer in the room. The smouldering agitation of the day flared up in a desperate need to be alone. I resolutely opened the door and stepped out on to the balcony.

The mist was quite gone. The aul lay soaked in the greenish moonbeams, and straight in front, as though coming down into the next house, hung a gigantic glacier. Above and below me, the many buildings of the aul stretched like a miniature Babylon, with every stone picked out. In a shed in a corner of the yard the horses neighed in their sleep. The depthless sky was set with white stars. The sides of the mighty pyramids towering over the aul, rosy by day, now shone faintly green, while the snow of the glacier-tops gleamed white. Spelled by the night, I went slowly down the creaking steps into the yard, and out through the gate.

Quietly I went down the empty narrows street, under the hushed balconies, past ancient stone boundaries and tumbled walls. Somewhere a dog barked, and further down a group of people stooping under heavy sacks cut across my path. I guessed these were the geologists, who had found their comrades and were coming back with them to the aul. I heard their tired voices and plodding steps. Waiting till they'd gone, I regained the quiet.

Through the cold dark silence I wandered like a wayfarer who wants to be alone with the night and needs nothing else. Life went on somewhere below, far below that village deserted and given over to moon, eternal ice, stars. Sitting down on a stone, I surrendered to my thoughts, wondering at the simple austerity of that wild spot. I began to feel as though I were living in more epochs than one. Around me were the houses of Babylon. There, in the living-room, highlanders dressed as in far-off Shamil's days, sat on an old Lezghin carpet and talked in lowered voices. Down below, in the school, strong lads and girls, who had nothing in common with these walls, were getting ready for sleep. Along lonely tracks Safar fled from his desire along the mad night-gallop. Natasha sat at home, tossed from her distant Russian town to these crags, waiting for her drunken husband, while he dribblingly swilled another glass of vodka. Was it for shame of him that she had hidden herself here in this wilderness?

All this took place ten years ago; and as I sat on the stone, I felt that I wasn't likely to come twice at this place on such a cruel night of moonlight. Twice experience such a day of confusion and agitation. When the day's work is done at last. When the day's work is done at last. . . .

In the camps watchdogs were sleeping, with chins rested on the small mounds they had scratched up; and only the rams could

cross freely from one herd to another. Sleeping too were the shepherds, wrapped in a scrap of rug, while the embers smouldered in the failing fires.

I felt cold and stood up. Again I went wandering through the streets and lanes, up and down stone steps, saying over and over the same Lezghin word, "*Ier*—good." The short light syllable was in tune with the icy heavenly feeling of that strange night. *Ier!* Glancing at the house, before me, I recognized the balcony-pillars, the images carved on my memory. Natasha's house, with no one in the balcony. I could see every crack on the pillars, and pictured her standing there, as she had stood when she startled Safar and myself.


I stood there like a fool, staring at the house. A small house, old and poor. Shutters closed in all the windows. A shadow, almost black, fell over against the balcony, and something clattered. I listened, and the noise came again. Going up, I peered into the gloom, and saw a horse tethered to a pillar. I felt something familiar. Then, closer, I saw it was Safar's dapple-grey; and the saddlebags were his, bright-tintured bags that I'd coveted. So Safar hadn't gone very far.

Dead silence hung all around, so deep that I almost heard the moon beams giving out a faint yellow ring. I stroked the horse's mane. He looked at me and started noisily sniffing my hands; evidently Safar was in the habit of bringing him titbits.

Leaving the square, I went up again towards Akhmet's house, and suddenly I saw a woman seated on a stone, lost to the world, staring at some spot on the mountain, at the lofty pyramids and their glistening glaciers. Her bronze face was rigid, with compressed lips; her hands lay on her knees, as though she listened intently to some sound which nobody else could hear. Aishe.

She did not stir as I came near. Tears were rolling down her brown cheeks, but she sat there unmoving. I passed her, glancing once more back at the small house and the horse; then I went on quickly. When I arrived back, all the highlanders were asleep. Stepan had dozed off where he sat, leant against the wall, without even covering himself up, and was loudly snoring. I didn't want to wake Terentyev out of his sound slumbers. I found my short cloak in a corner, wrapped it round me, and at once fell asleep.

Translated From the Russian by E. MANNING AND P. MEADOWS.



Albert Camus

ARCHIVES OF THE PLAGUE

I. Exhortation to Doctors during the Plague

GOOD WRITERS DO NOT KNOW, IF THE PLAGUE IS infectious. But they suspect it is. That is why, gentlemen, they are of the opinion that you should have the windows opened in the room where you visit the sick person. One must simply remember that the plague may just as well be in the roadway and can infect you all the same, whether the windows are open or not.

The same writers advise you to wear a gas-mask and hold, under your nose, a cloth soaked in vinegar. Also, you should carry somewhere about you a sachet of essences recommended in books, balm, marjolaine, mint, sage, rosemary, orange blossom, sweet basil, thyme, serpolet, lavender, bay-leaves, lemon peel, and rind of quince. It's advisable to be completely covered with oil-cloth. That, however, can be got over. But there is no possible getting-over the conditions on which both good and bad writers are in agreement. The first is that you must never feel the pulse of the patient without dipping your fingers in vinegar. You will guess why. But perhaps it would be better to omit this detail. For if the patient has the plague, the ceremony will not shift it. And, if he is clear, he will not have called you in. In times of epidemic, every man looks after his own liver, to guard against all mistakes.

The second condition is that you must never look the patient in the face, so as not to be in the direct line of his breath. In the same way, if, in spite of the uncertainty we feel about the usefulness of the procedure, you have opened the window, it is best not to place yourself in the line of the wind which might at that very moment carry to you the death-gasp of the plague-stricken person.

Also you must not visit any patients when you are fasting. You

will have no resistance. But don't eat too much either. You will succumb. And if, in spite of all these precautions, something poisonous manages to get into your mouth, there is no remedy except a refusal to swallow your spit for the entire period of your visit. This condition is the hardest to follow.

When all these precautions have more or less been followed you ought not to think you've settled the matter. For there are other conditions, very necessary for the preservation of your body, even though they have more to do with the state of the soul. "No individual," said an ancient writer, "can allow himself to touch anything in a country where the plague is prevalent." That is well said. And there is no place which we should leave unclean in ourselves, even in the secret places of the heart, so as to get on the right side of the few chances which remain to us. That is above all true for you, the doctors, who are nearer than others, if that is possible, to the disease, and who are therefore more under suspicion. You must become examples.

The first thing is that you must never be afraid. We have seen men become first-rate soldiers even when they are afraid of guns. But that is because the bullet kills the brave man equally with the coward. There is an element of chance in war while there is very little in plague. Fear vitiates the blood and excites the passions. Fear therefore disposes a man to the attack of disease, and, if the body is to triumph over infection, the soul must be strong. Because, there is no fear except that of a final end, pain being transient. And so you, doctors of the plague, must fortify yourselves against the idea of Death and come to terms with it, before going into the kingdom which Plague prepares for Death. If you win on this point, you will also win in all others, and we will see you smiling in the heart of the terror. You will realize that what is needed is a philosophy.

You will also have to be sober in all things, which doesn't mean being chaste, for that would be another kind of excess. Practise a reasonable gaiety so that sorrow may never tamper with the flow of the blood and prepare it for decomposition. For this there is nothing better than the drinking of wine in respectable quantities, so that you may assuage a little the atmosphere of consternation which comes to you from the stricken town.

In a general way, observe that moderation which is the first enemy of plague and the natural regimen of man. Nemesis was not,

as you were told in school, the goddess of vengeance, but the goddess of moderation. And her terrible blows did not fall on men until they had thrown themselves into disorder and disequilibrium. Plague comes from excess. It is excess itself, and lacks all self-control. Realize this, if you wish to fight it understandingly. Do not let Thucydides be right, when he talks of the plague in Athens, saying doctors were no help because, mainly, they treated disease without understanding it. The scourge loves the secret of lairs. Bring to it the light of intelligence and fairness. That will be simpler, you'll find in practise, than refusing to swallow your spit.

Finally you should be masters of yourselves. For example, you must know how to gain respect for the law you have chosen, that of blockade and quarantine. A historiographer of Provence has said that in the old days, when any prisoner escaped, his neck was broken. You will not want that to happen. But you won't forget the general interest either. You will make no exceptions to the rules as long as they are useful, even if your heart urges you. You are asked to forget something of what you are, without ever forgetting what you owe yourself. That is the law of a tranquil mind.

Furnished with these remedies and virtues, nothing remains for you but to repulse fatigue and keep your imagination fresh. You ought not, you ought never, become used to seeing men die like flies, as they do in our streets, today, and as they have always done since the Plague received its name at Athens. You will never cease to be thrown into consternation by Thucydides description of those blackened mouths, which ooze a sweat of blood and whose raucous coughs drag up small infrequent drops of spit, saffron-coloured and salty. You will never become familiar with those corpses which even carrion-birds avoid for fear of infection. And you will continue revolting against this dreadful chaos where those who refuse their help to others perish in solitude, while those who devote themselves to their fellows die in heaps; where joy no longer has its natural sanction, nor merit its due place; where men dance on the edge of tombs; where the lover repels his mistress to avoid giving her his disease; where the burden of a crime is never borne by the criminal, but by the scape-goat chosen in the madness of a time of terror.

The peaceful spirit is the strongest. You will be strong in the face of this strange tyranny. You will not serve this religion which is as old as the most ancient cults. It killed Pericles when he

wanted no other glory than that of never causing any citizen grief; and from the day of that famous murder up to the day when it descended on our innocent town, it has never ceased from decimating mankind and demanding the sacrifice of children. Even if this religion comes to us from heaven, we will have to state that heaven is unjust. If you reach that point, you will not, however, feel any reason for pride. On the contrary, you'll often ponder on your ignorance, to be sure of observing moderation, sole mistress of the scourge.

It remains to say that none of this is easy. In spite of your masks and your sachets, vinegar and oil-cloth, in spite of the serenity of your courage and your unyielding efforts, a day will come when you will be unable to bear this town of sufferers, this crowd which circles round in the broiling, dusty streets, these cries, this panic without a future. A day will come when you will want to cry out your horror in face of the fear and pain of everyone. On that day, there is no further remedy I can offer you, unless it be the pity which is the sister of ignorance.

II. Speech of the Plague to its Officers

I reign. That is a fact, therefore a right. But it is a right not to be discussed; you must adapt yourselves.

Besides, don't be mistaken, if I reign, it's in my own way, and it would be more correct to say I function. You others, naturally, are a bit romantic and would willingly see me as a black king or a splendid insect. You must have your touch of pathos, it's well known. Well, I won't have it. I own no sceptre, not I, but I wear handcuffs of lutestring. That's a trick I have of irritating, and it's right you should be irritated: you have everything to learn. Your king owns dirty nails, a broken neck, and a brown visor. He sits on no throne, but just presides.

That is why, as soon as I arrive, pathos disappears. It's forbidden, pathos, with various other fairy-tales such as the ridiculous anguish of happiness, the stupid look of lovers, egotistical contemplation of landscapes, frugal pleasure and culpable irony. Instead I bring organization. It will bore you somewhat at first, but you'll end by admitting that organization is better than bad pathos.

I assume you've already understood me. From today on, the main thing is for you to learn how to die in good order. Till now you have died rather by chance, by guesswork, so to speak. You have died because the weather was cold when it should have been

hot, because the traffic went too fast and airplanes took off too slowly, because the outline of the Vosges was blue, because in spring the rivers in big cities look attractive to the lonely, or because there are imbeciles who kill for profit when it is so much more distinguished to kill for pleasure. Yes, you have been dying badly. A death here, a death there, this man in his bed, that one in a trench! It was licence. But, happily, this anarchy is to be cleared up. One death for all. With the beautiful neatness of a roll-call. You will have your credentials, you will not die by caprice. Fate, henceforth, is settling down, he has taken offices. He will not deal with you with that disagreeably disdainful and negligent stare which he used to have. He will, on the contrary, take great care, having become meticulous and slightly mad: efficiency will be increased. Previously his carelessness carried you as far as death, but never beyond. Now you need never fear that you'll be forgotten, you will be there in the statistics. So as not to be useless for evermore, your bodies will be given to science and your skin will make lamp-shades. O, I forgot to mention, you will die, of course, but you will be cremated afterwards (or before). It is cleaner, and that's all part of the plan.

To fall into line in order to die well, that's the main thing. In this way you'll win my favour. But beware of unreasonable ideas, passions of the soul, as you call them, those little fevers which lead to big revolts. I have suppressed these compliances and put logic in their place. I have a horror of all difference. From today on you will therefore be reasonable, you will be marked on the groins, and you will carry openly, under your arm, the bubonic star which will mark you out as ready for the blow. The others, those who, sure they're not concerned, stand in queues for cinemas, will draw away from you who are suspect. But don't get bitter, it does concern them, and their turn will come. They're on the list, and I forget none. All under suspicion; that's the way to begin.

For the rest, nothing of what I've said prevents sentimentality. I love birds, the first violets, the fresh mouths of young girls. At long intervals, that's all very refreshing; and it is quite true that I am an idealist. My heart . . . But I feel that I am turning soft, and I do not wish to proceed further. Let us simply run over the heads. I bring you silence, order and absolute justice. I do not ask you for thanks. What I do for you is all quite natural. But I demand your active collaboration. My ministry has begun.

Translated by A.L.

Malcolm Lowry

SESTINA IN A CANTINA

LEGION

Watching this dawn's mnemonic of old dawning:
Jonquil-colored, delicate, some in prison,
Green dawns of drinking tenderer than sunset,
But clean and delicate like dawns of ocean
Flooding the heart with pale light in which horrors
Stampede like plump wolves in distorting mirrors.
Oh, we have seen ourselves in many mirrors;
Confusing all our sunsets with the dawning,
Investing every tongue and leaf with horrors,
And every stranger overtones for prison,
And seeing mainly in the nauseous ocean
The last shot of our life before sunset.

ST. LUKE (a ship's doctor)

How long since you have really seen a sunset?
The mind has many slanting lying mirrors,
The mind is like that sparkling greenhouse ocean
Glass-deceptive in the Bengal dawning;
The mind has ways of keeping us in prison,
The better there to supervise its horrors.

SIR PHILLIP SIDNEY

Why do you not, sir, organize your horrors
And shoot them one day, preferably at sunset,
That we may wake up next day not in prison,
No more deceived by lies or many mirrors,
And go down to the cold beach at dawning
To lave away the past in colder ocean?

ST. LUKE

No longer is there freedom on the ocean.
And even if there were, he likes his horrors,
And if he shot them would do so at dawning
That he might have acquired some more by sunset,
Breaking them in by that time before mirrors
To thoughts of spending many nights in prison.

LEGION

The fungus-colored sky of dawns in prison,
The fate that broods on every pictured ocean,
The fatal conversations before mirrors,
The fiends and all the spindly breeds of horrors,
Have shattered by their beauty every sunset
And rendered quite intolerable old dawning.

The oxen standing by this door at dawning—
 Outside our tavern now, outside our prison—
 Red through the wagon-wheels, jealousies like sunset
 Swinging now in a sky as calm as ocean
 Where Venus hangs her obscene born of horrors
 For us now swaying in a hall of mirrors—
 Such horrid beauty maddened all my mirrors,
 Has burst in heart's eye sanity of dawning,
 No chamber in my house brimful of horrors
 But does not whisper of some dreadful prison,
 Worse than all ships dithering through the ocean
 Tottering like drunkards, arms upraised at sunset.

RICHARD III (a barman)

Vain derelict all avid for the sunset!
 Shine out fair sun till you have bought new mirrors
 That you may see your shadow pass the ocean,
 And sunken no more pass our way at dawning,
 But lie on the cold stone sea floor of some prison
 A chunk of sodden driftwood gnawed by horrors.

LEGION

At first I never looked on them as horrors;
 But one day I was drinking hard near sunset,
 And suddenly saw the world as a giant prison,
 Ruled by tossing moose-heads, with hand mirrors,
 And heard the voice of the idiot speak at dawning,
 And since that time have dwelt beside the ocean.

EL UNIVERSAL (early edition)

Did no one speak of love beside the ocean,
 Have you not felt, even among your horrors,
 Granting them, there was such a thing as dawning,
 A dawning for man whose star seems now at sunset,
 Like a million-sheeted scarlet dusty mirrors,
 But one day must be led out of his prison?

LEGION

I see myself as all mankind in prison,
 With hands outstretched to lanterns by the ocean;
 I see myself as all mankind in mirrors,
 Babbling of love while at his back rise horrors
 Ready to suck the blood out of the sunset
 And amputate the godhead of the dawning.

THE SWINE

And now the dawning drives us from our prison
 Into the dawn like sunset, into the ocean,
 Bereaving him of horrors,
 but leaving him his mirrors . . .

NOCTURNE

*This evening Venus sings alone
And homeward feathers stir like silk
Like the dress of a multitudinous ghost
The pinions tear through a sky like milk.
Seagulls all soon to be turned to stone
That seeking I lose beyond the trail
In the woods that I and my ignorance own
Where together we walk on our hands and knees
Together go walking beneath the pale
Of a beautiful evening love the most
And yet this evening is my jail
And policemen glisten in the trees.*

GLAUCOUS WINGED GULL

*The hook nosed angel with spring plumage,
Hunter of edible stars, and sage
Carsbane and defiler of the porch,
Dead sailor, finial, and image
Of freedom in morning blue, and strange torch
At twilight, stranger world of love,
Old haunter of the Mauretania,
Snowblinded once, I saved. And hove
Out of the rainbarrel, back at heaven
A memory stronger than childhood even
Or freighters rolling to Roumania.*

PORT MOODY

*Over the mauve there is smoke like a swan
Pouring from the chimney of the sawmill.
In our yellow and red boat we drift on
While broken bottles of pine guard the hill,
Sitting still as two round unspeaking forts.
Red hammers beat on the xylophone keys,
Under the sunet, of the tiered retorts—
The loveliest of oil refineries.
Power lines rule the west ; three kinds of smoke :
Brown smudge, pure white from buildings, gentian
From the stiff incinerator, evoke
The music of our inattention.
Oil preen the waters with peacock feathers.
So we have sat drifting in all weathers.*

HISTORICAL REQUIEM

PROEM

*The dead burn out; and we, the living, freeze.
Hordes move against us and our children's sons.
We are the heirs
Whose warring hours
Are filled with our own blood. Like shrieking trees
We are rolled in the nightmare as it runs
From fires of gorge and bracken
Where fighting dead have spoken.*

FIRST EPITAPH

(for Jesus, called Christ)

*Good Friday is remembered. The stale
Movements of a watching crowd at play,
Of detailed soldiers and women grieving,
The turn of weather, kindness, the pale
Few last words heard on the sinking day,
Are all recorded for the slow weaving
Of a lighter guilt. Many have died
The same slow death, better or worse men
Whose names are unrecorded. Does their pride
Not touch our guilt? Must they die again?*

SECOND EPITAPH

(for Jonathan Swift)

*At last his dark rage had to die. Who
Would dare to climb that terrible stair
To the high, strange night that his mind made?
Now we watch how on the lips that blew
Down tyrants foam withers into air.
In his face a fortress and floods fade,
The whip droops like wet fur. Do not gaze
Longer here, nor touch this dust. Long after
Darkness falls with dust from summer days
We'll bear the huge angers of his laughter.*

THIRD EPITAPH

(for Lenin)

*Even in his lifetime children sang
Legendary garlands for his name,
Made him miracles like a lion's name.
That earth has ripened; and red fruits hang,
Like the heavy spoils of some rare flame,
On the unfolding years. Knock again!
Dream beyond this tomb where the sad crowd
Stands and gazes! Listen! You will hear
The falling of tall towers; for the loud
Ruin of new-age Jerichos is near.*

—DORIAN COOKE.

Chronicle & Polemic

ALBERT CAMUS

There exists a nostalgia for a naked world, a transparent life, a barren theme. Ideas of simplicity, poverty, privation have always been on a par with the idea of good. As if there existed deep down in us all something solid, a truth which daily appearances distort and which we must reconquer. The search for the fundamental, even if it means at the same time the discovery of the banal, the generalized in spite of its common basis, the authentic notwithstanding its barrenness, is task enough for a man; and it seems to have been chosen by Albert Camus. At least it is the experience which he hands over to us in literary form in *La Peste*.

Is such an attempt possible? It comes back to the wish to make good literature out of good feelings. Albert Camus knows this well enough: *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* was written with bad feelings, exclusively; *L'Etranger* with no feelings at all; and *La Peste* with good ones only—"I have thought much on Gide, while writing it." For Gide holds that to write good literature means to preserve for man his portion of evil truth and to make for us a picture which hides nothing of the vices, the tares, the falsity and shame of which man is at every instant capable. And Gide has on his side in effect all good literature, Balzac and Dostoevsky and Kafka and Milton's Satan and all the dammed of *The Inferno*. But this thought will seem even more profound if we realize that literature, like life, is duplicity. Duplicity on the plane of technique: Where the reader "gets along" best is where the author must have been the most adroit; it is the ruse which gives the illusion of naivety. And duplicity on the plane of reality, because there is no such thing as realism; the work of art depicts the world as it isn't; but it is actually because it is not like that that it acquires a meaning for us. The hero of a novel who was just like us would not captivate us; he must be what we, with all our energy, demand or refuse to be in our moments of enthusiasm or doubt. The reality of fiction resides in its pure possibility. And the only way in which literature can remain faithful to life, is, while representing it, to injure its agony and infidelity. There can be no question of letting us contemplate the True, the Beautiful, the Honest, or any absolute essence. The poets ought to exclude Plato from their republic, and all that they can do is to proclaim the secret pang of every joy, the precariousness of every truth. In short, they are allowed to play with shadows.

But Albert Camus attempts a copernican revolution and climbs out of his pagan hell, passing through the purgatory where without understanding the Stranger expiates a useless sin, right up to this Wager to reverse in three hundred pages of good feelings two thousand years of literature. Has he therefore written a bad novel? It is a question which must be decided. But let us say at once that he

had in his hands everything necessary for avoiding the failure. He knew how to humanize good feelings by showing them as relative and threatened. That is, he had not left the kingdom of shadows, being content to reverse the duplicity by making us feel, this time, the indestructible joy in all misery, the truth in all accident, and in every man a possible justification.

Referring to *La Peste*, I have spoken rather glibly of a novel. It is possible also to see it as an allegory, or a piece of reportage; but reportage of an imaginary and universal happening; an allegory inside-out or a work of fiction (plague and the efforts of the sanitary squad) does not reflect reality (the Occupation and the Resistance) except as a shared experience which spares the author all precise details—the second aspect of the theme being only something provoked by the general evil which the first represents. Here is a novel in fact which all the time indicts what has been romantic in all novels, that is to say the power of evasion and irresponsibility. At first (1) these ambiguities lead to no discomfort. The reader accepts what is offered to him in such good faith. The reportage seems actual to him; and the novel succeeds in the degree to which it manages to revive justly the obvious simplicity of lived-through event. The reader feels no surprise at having entered into a sort of truth. If he tells himself that the book he's engaged in reading is a very remarkable book, it's at the moment when he fails to admit that the book goes very close to banality. His first astonishment is at having been conquered by something he seems to have known from all eternity. His first discovery: an old certitude. Yes, there he is, sent back, with the author, to proverbs, commonplace, things as simple as this: Absence is the greatest of evils; the unacceptable suffering of children; love of one's neighbour, death.

We understand still better here why good feelings are in literature a stumbling-block. It's because they're banal. A fine crime has always the charm of the exceptional. But a good deed? Each person comes home as satisfied as in the tales that end with a marriage. We see that good feelings are dangerous because usually they are taken as a solution. But in *La Peste* devotion, abnegation, sanctity resolve nothing. They are not even satisfying. Good feelings threaten to get stranded, like all things human, and it is by reason of their weakness that they rediscover their humanity. Similarly, banality attains greatness through being a conquest. Good and true have lost their capital letters; no transcendental essence establishes them, but man is constrained to establish them in himself. And if they finally exist for us, the readers, it is only through the approval that the author lends them and invites us to lend in his company.

In *Remarque sur la Revolte*, a short essay deriving from the same impulse as *La Peste*, Camus found in revolt the primary moral truth. Man says *yes* in saying *no*, and by his refusal utters a positive dignity which he did not formerly realize. He thus establishes a value, a value which transcends him since he holds faster to it than to his own life. The desert of the absurd is then opened up to the refreshing emotion of the solidarity of beings. Anguish is dissipated in the possibility of action. But consider: this action is not an all-powerful good feeling, and it is even the "plague" alone which makes it possible. Those who, like Father Paneloux, believe in an absolute of good, preach submission and, struck by the scourge, condemn themselves to die without receiving a doctor's help.

(1) *The point of this reservation will appear later.*

And there is this further point: all revolt is, metaphysically, revolt against our human condition. At the very moment it affirms this condition, it denies it. It denies then the situation through departure from which man conceives and sets forth his revolt; and to the demand of sacrifice there answers in us that of the resigned flight into happiness. "The value contained in the revolting affirmation is never given once for all. . . . It must be upheld without pause."

So there the good feelings are restored to their precariousness. If a morality exists, it is not distinct from our life. It must be conquered in doubt and built up in dissatisfaction; and that is why Camus puts emphasis on effort. We can then hardly reproach *La Peste* for not taking us far enough. Doubtless, after the negativeness of the absurd, revolt is only a moment of birth and the alternative sacrifice-happiness the first dilemma of our existence. Action in turn offers its own dilemmas: violence or non-violence, and the problem of the "blood of others." Theoretically, in his *Remarque*, Camus has taken sides when he shows that the revelation which comes to us in revolt of the solidarity of beings cuts across the categories of good and evil and sets love and the dialogue on one side, silence and the lie on the other. But *La Peste*, where the scourge remains abstract and where the doctor can indifferently care for all men, lacked the right to formulate, except implicitly, these issues of choice.

We are then permitted to wait for a book where the cares become ticklish, and evil is respectable through having taken human form. *La Peste*, however shows us enough of it to save us from the mistake of believing that good and evil will appear to us, in such a book, as settled once for all. Those categories, from their very moment of origin, contain the elements of their destruction. Neither sacrifice nor happiness is finally sanctified. And if, for instance, love exists, it cannot help forever precipitating a debate that goes on right up to the point of our judgment on evil. It makes us indefinitely hesitant. And in the last resort it is love which remains the sole tormented truth of our life, the only one which, beyond all atrophy and hate, has power of redemption.

That is without doubt why all the affirmations of Camus in *La Peste* are founded on tenderness. That is the only proof they ask. And as for people, how can we judge them unless we see above all in each of them that which, tragically and simply, links them to our destiny? We cannot find antipathetic either Rambert who at first prefers happiness, or the old asthmatic who has been immured for years in the false immortality of his maniac and good-humoured irony, or Cottard the dealer who, cut off from his fellows by crime, feels himself at home in the plague. They are victims before being traitors; and these lepers of feeling still participate in the scourge by their refusal. The only man whom Camus resigns himself to judge is also the only one who has dared to judge men: solicitor-general Tarrou. For the rest, the love we feel for them alone authorizes our reproach; our grief comes only from a brotherhood which is not reciprocated.

This being-for-others, which we are when in revolt, also explains the fine pages on Absence. One would think that the dominant emotion of the plague ought to be fear. On the contrary, it is separation. One accepts well enough the threat against what one is, but not against that to which one is bound. As soon as the scourge comes to hazard a solidarity that had become habitual, it is in our relations with our neighbours that we regain the first experience of its fragility. The tragedy of the couple divided by absence or illness becomes thus the image

of the alienation of men from one another. The inhabitants of the plague, through very near laceration, feel anew the monstrous isolation that strikes their community. That also is the moment when they remind one another too late of the treasure of their love and this cry of perpetual nostalgia escapes from every mouth: If only we could start all over again! But in fact the new start is always there. That cry is the rough draft of the dialogue which ought to bind men together. Each injustice denounced, each choice affirmed, even each regret brings forward a scrap of the evidence out of which we construct our being and our future. What alone matters is that our speech is honest, without compromise, fundamental. So we understand that Camus gladly makes the blow explicit in terms of language, and uses silence and the lie to mean violence and political realism. That brings us back to *La Peste* as a written work, and poses a question more essential in relation to Camus than at first appears: the question of language.

Language shares in the revolt. I do not refer only to the language of combat, the affective language which employs optatives, imperatives, warnings. Every uttered word presupposes the possibility of an answer; every act of designation is an affirmation involving all men. The objection might be made that at least in literature this weapon is turned against itself, since the work of art, despite the revolt it opposes to reality, and in its very effort to correct creation⁽¹⁾ seems to create a self-sufficient object. But that is only to say that the dilemma of existence (sacrifice-happiness) operates also inside literature. Just as revolt goes so far as to deny itself in denying the situation from which it is born, so the power of conflict through language applies here to language itself.

Literature wavers between utilitarianism, which wants to turn every word into an act, and art-for-art's-sake which abolishes language by making it absolute, as clearly appears in the extreme poetry-forms where we can see the world's conflict defined by and through a mutual annihilation of words. Well, we must note that these two pulls, opposed as they may be, and even because they are *dialectically* opposed, are not irreconcilable. It comes about that the best works have a fighting reach in proportion to the extent that they seem more perfected in themselves, more isolated from the world. The action proper to art is indeed rather a reaction: the more the work is folded back on itself, the more it will possess, when introduced into the world, a power of scandal and in consequence of renovation. Paradoxically, its efficacy is a function of its detachment. But this paradox is quite natural, since it does no more than reproduce that of life and art rejoins life (as I pointed out above) only by miming its duplicity.

Here, art receives a moral function. For this perfection which consists in attaining the greatest efficacy by the greatest accomplishment is not a matter of aesthetics. We say that the work will endure to the extent that it is happy. But to possess this fascination of happiness, as well as the revolting vigour that is inseparable from it, it must mate more intimately with the paradox where revolt and fascination live. It must then aspire to a more fundamental position and make itself more honest. That is why every work worthy of this name is always founded on good feelings. And if it is correct in life to become a doctor (that is, to work for human solidarity), it is correct in literature to become a

(1) To cite a term which Camus uses in his *Remarque*.

writer (that is, to work for more and more spontaneous and veracious communication among men, an—hand me the phrase—to take care with one's style. (1)

I do not know if Camus would give his assent to these ideas which I have taken the liberty of formulating while using his vocabulary. But his practice certainly follows these lines. The problem is to rediscover a state of language where the affirmation resumes all its power of innocent revolt. For that reason, prescribe all allusive and ambiguous discourse and return to the words of all the world, to the sense of the most common usage. For that reason, seek afresh, apart from the optative and imperative forms too entangled with human passions, a neutral and quasi-impersonal state of expression where affirmation remains alone. For that reason, have no fear of trusting oneself to eternal images such as that of the scourge turning in the city's sky, because they cannot help being true when re-encountered in this way. Finally, write in short phrases which impress themselves because they rise from the very foundation of all language and all thought. Since *Noces*, Camus' style has evolved towards this rough denuding, this resourceful state of rest, which leaves us confronted with all that is most universally human in our depths.

La Peste cultivates this universality. Nothing could be both more direct and more impersonal than that tale of Rieux (who waits moreover for the last page to tell us his name). The two sermons of Father Paneloux could be two fine pieces of bravura if this virtuosity was not correctly the only way at the author's disposal for leaving to the priest the responsibility of his own words and for adding the orator's personality to the objectivity of the story. But it is certainly in the note books of Tarrou, a sort of M. Teste of the heart, that Camus has sought to compress most closely this neutrality of style in which simple notation plays its part. Rather than propriety, we must speak here of honesty of style. The word does not stand for more than evidence of the man who conceived it, and this evidence is evidence of every man. Thus language can bring back to daylight the indelible and banal portion of good feelings out of which is made also our authenticity.

All this, anyway, is what *La Peste* ought to have done. Up to this point I have spoken rather of what the novel potentially was than what it was in reality. We feel in fact as we read the book a discomfort derived from the way in which it fails to give full form to its implicit content. It has rediscovered good feelings, their tragic virtue. But now it offers us people who seem vowed to a gloomy resignation. Their struggle, says one of them, will be "an interminable defeat." True, there is a grandeur in defeat as long as it is accompanied with exaltation, which isn't the case here. We keep awaiting some Prince Muishkin; we find a sympathetic and gentle Rieux, a peaceful sententious Tarrou. At the same time the very structure of the book begins to bore us. The reportage seems fabricated, the novel too correct. We shall grasp still better the nature of this insufficiency if we define with more precision Camus' moral attitude as revealed to us in his other works.

In *Remarque sur la Revolte* there is a passage where the author opposes revolt to revolution. Revolution "is the passage of the idea into historical experience,

(1) Thus, Craud, the worker, who spends his evenings in retouching to the point of Nausea a still-unsatisfying phrase, is presented to us as the most moving hero of *La Peste*.

while revolt on the contrary is the movement which leads individual experience to the idea." Put another way and taken to its logical conclusion, this statement infers the existence, on one hand, of pure revolt, destructive and spontaneous, which can well enough be represented by Caligula in Camus' play of that name, and on the other hand, of alienated revolt, hardened into formulas, revolution which is a setback because (*Remarque* tells us) the ideas of justice and liberty there enter into conflict and because it "consists of the loss of complicity and the negation of the human solidarity discovered in revolt." . . . But against this scheme set the facts. It is language which, at the first movement of purely instinctive and destructive revolt, communicates direction and efficacy. It is in language the solidarity contained in revolt becomes aware of itself, and it is by language that reflection is created (the dialogue of the individual with himself) as well as free discussion (dialogue of men among themselves) which humanizes revolt and permits it finally to change our condition. In truth, there exist two silences: that of pure revolt, anterior to language, and that, later, of the free word stifled in conformism and violence.

It is only too clear that Camus denies both of them. The society of which he dreams is a society of "dialogue." Therein lies the meaning of the efforts of Rieux and Tarrou; the meaning that we wish to make out in *La Peste*. And this dialogue, consciousness and working-out of solidarity, is precisely what we call good feelings, menaced every moment by silence and the lie, and thus tragic—dedicated perhaps to setback, but for that every reason pathetic.

We understand then that Camus' novel does not respect the true nature of good feelings if it gives us an effect of resignation. At the outset I said that it was dangerous to take those feelings as a solution. But it is equally dangerous to believe them absolutely ineffective. For how then can we communicate to the characters that warmth without which they are only abstractions? Weakness has overwhelmed the approval which alone seemed capable of establishing moral values; and the honesty of which the author makes proof is quite futile if it has only a stoical last-resort against loss of heart. We understand also that the balance of the whole book has been falsified. We have seen in short that the ambiguities (novel-reportage; reportage-allegory) which make up the structure of *La Peste* were justified because they reproduced the ambiguity inherent in life. But all that argument falls down if this ambiguity is lost. "Defeat" is not then the double of the passion which is inseparable from it in existence. Camus himself declared in *Noëes* that despair is *not equivalent* to resignation; that it can on the contrary be the principle of an overflowing and almost, scared joy. Was it not necessary, besides, to imagine Sisyphus happy? And there is no question here of that inner peace that Tarrou is said to seek, or of the blind happiness of Rambert, but of a rending happiness. Only impassioned approval can give good feelings their truth, in literature as in life, and only that magic of language mentioned in the last lines of *Ni Victimes ni Bourreaux*, can allow us (there where the *I* becomes *We*) to renew a dialogue without which we have no choice except to plunge into phraseless death.

MAURICE JEAN LEFEBRE.

THE WORKS OF B. TRAVEN

Traven's dislike of modern publicity methods and ballyhoo operates so strongly that he refused to publish in the U.S.A. He preferred to issue *The Death Ship*, *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *Government*, and *The Carreta* in Germany, risking the distortions of re-translation into English. His last book appeared in its original form in England. This implies no racial or regional preference on Traven's part, but a distrust in proportion to the degree of mechanization. A consistent hatred embracing the entire concept of "Government" finds vigorous expression throughout Traven's novels and forms a permanent background to his writing. It is necessary to consider, in fact it is impossible to ignore, his progressive belief in the superiority of cultural primitivism; the irreconcilable dichotomy between Traven's "natural" and state-controlled worlds accounts for the contradictions in his personal ideology, his development from the harshness of *The Death Ship* to the comparative escapism of *The Bridge in the Jungle*, his last published novel.

His first two books, *The Death Ship* and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, are the only two dealing directly with "wage coolies" of civilized background. His later books are set in Mexico, not primarily to give the universal story of oppression greater force, nor because it is easier to scissor out economic compulsives in a largely feudal and semi-feudal economy and to relate them with greater clarity to modern capitalism. His motives are largely due to a basic belief in individual regeneration, and anarchistic hope, which leads him to identify himself more and more with these peons, waggoners and finda Indians; because in his own environment, while he sees the terrible maze in which the workers blindly stumble, no proposed solution is acceptable to him. He is a Pied Piper, hoping for a miracle yet expecting none. In the octopus embrace of Omnipresent Authority, he suspects all organization as further restraint. He realizes the necessity for solidarity amongst those menaced by the Machine, but believes that only a system of free communion, based on the free will of individual man, can succeed in stemming the robot-like advance. The Mexican-Indians, in spite of external pressure, in spite of the slow, steady encroachment of industrialization with its attendant curses, still retain that inner bond of experience, a spiritual unity and continuity, a natural harmony which has not yet been disturbed. Here, in semi-primitive conditions, it may be possible to educate, while retaining peace and dignity. Diaz has been overthrown. Traven sees faint encouraging signs . . . the railwaymen's union, for instance; union in the fullest sense. Education is spreading. Maybe something can be built up. But ultimately Traven isn't very optimistic; he doesn't really think that the millennium can be achieved anywhere in the world at this stage, when bureaucracy is internationally cracking the whip. At least, then it is better, in a negative sort of way, to throw in your lot with people who haven't yet learnt all the subservient tricks, who don't jump through hoops unless the alternative is starvation. Here the inner core of humanity is still intact. Traven realizes it is a short-term reprieve, yet hopes for a miracle . . . a change in the heart of men. Here is the perpetual contradiction in all he writes, the constant inward struggle. There can be no change in the heart of man,

because man has been atomized and absorbed by the State. There is only the State. But still, in case regeneration is possible, because the absorption is not yet complete, Traven continues to fight, even as he retreats further and further towards "natural" man, and nihilism.

Traven is a superb story-teller. He has the gift of narrative exposition. In dealing with strange countries and customs, he describes with documentary simplicity and lack of "technicolor" embroidery. His style is flexible enough to mirror the tempo and texture of his mood, which, with few exceptions, is unmaurkish and unforced. He uses a tough argot reminiscent of Brecht and Toller in its irony and accent, and quite unlike the American-Hemingway school of hearty suppressed sentimentality. His commentary is balanced to the story, and it says much for his skill that his passionate convictions and vehement reiteration never hold up the action. Traven flings his unpalatable truths in the face of society, spits gibes and urchin cat-calls; and tells and re-tells, from many angles, the story of man's savagery to man. He succeeds in piercing the callous acceptance that has grown round the familiar story. Although much of *The Carreta* and *Government* is pamphleteering, many of his truths self-evident, the books haven't the feel of moral tracts. You swallow the political pills without benefit of sugar coating, and read on for more. His indignation and violence find expression on many shifting levels, and his protest is as varied in form as the multitudinous evils he observes. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* is, apart from its basic moral, a most exciting adventure story. The tensions and static strain of camp-life, the slow monotony of panning gold, are skilfully built up to staccato action and psychological climax. He starts his books with anecdotes and stories germane to the theme, gives wonderful descriptions of food, the taste and smell of it, so important a part of unfamiliar life (one of the most bleak lacks in many travels); he delights in inconsequential, poetic legends, descriptions of dress, and custom, funny, touching, and with ironic intent—like the initiation ceremony of the Pebvil Indians, who literally put fire under their presidents' bottoms as a reminder of the responsibilities of office. For all his formlessness, Traven succeeds in illuminating his writing with bright, miniature-clear flashes; the terrible flying wedge; the avengers, in the murder of Amalio; the stokehold of the *Yorikke*, the hell of the falling fire bars; the account of the train robbery in the *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*; description of the Carretta's journey and Andrew's goodbye to Estrellita, the candle-hunt and grotesque funeral in *The Bridge in the Jungle*. The power of his style and the bitterness of the picture he has to present are so closely interwoven that usage has forged them into one weapon, and many weapons . . . hacksaw, chopper, rapier and X-ray, too. He diagnoses superbly, but offers neither bromides nor therapy. Calder-Marshall says it has been suggested that Traven's success may be due to the fact that the remoteness of a Death Ship and Mexican life from general experience may be a form of escape for the reader. To a South African, at least, his realistic appraisal of the quasi-charitable impulse, the role of religion, the economic compulsives, the ordinariness and lack of imagination rather than the basic swinishness of the average petty official and employer, the generalities about their (the Indian's) lack of brain, character, feeling, etc., are familiar and inescapable.

Traven is unsentimental and clear-eyed, and knows that "No one knows better how to blackguard a man than his fellowcorpse, his fellow proletarian, his fellow

victim of starvation and the lash" but he also knows the reasons. He is no moralist; to know all is to forgive all, but knowledge makes him angry—angry and impatient, and despairing. He sees "the State" with its creatures, religion, big business, war, as Behemoth crippling and deforming men out of all human semblance and conditioning them into unquestioning and superstitious acceptance of all its values. The stateless sailor of *The Death Ship*, who has been dumped across one frontier to another, an unwanted carcass, settles down in Spain, idle, and, at last, unharried, where "the sunshine is so golden and you may sleep where you care to," where "folks are all so kind and polite". Since Spain is "the only country that has not joined the war for democracy" (World War I is referred to) there is no need to discuss freedom. As he sits fishing that "old nail chest" the *Yorrike* sails by. The force of his "civilized" conditioning is such that he believes that unless he accepts any job offered to him, THEY will keep him permanently unemployed; the feeling of guilt because he has no regular work, forces him to sign on when *The Death Ship* hails him. He watches the receding coast of happy golden Spain and knows that

"He who enters here

His name and being are wiped out;

He is as though he had never been."

So much for dreams of escape, of fishing in the sun. Similarly Dobbs, in the *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, has to bum money because "brought up in the racket of a large city in America" "he hasn't the patience to fish and make a living like the Indians" or "the poorest halfbreeds." He originally decides to go prospecting for gold, because he can't get any other job, because the "man in the white coat" who gave him money three times turns out to be the same man so "that well is pumped dry." Also he wins a little money in a lottery, enough to invest in a mining project. Traven's characters are pawns in the Profit Game; as long as the game goes on, they are thrown around without salvation or appeal. He threatens "The song of the hero that does the work has never yet been sung. Mind out how you call for that song; you'll likely find it a bit too brutal for your taste." But, the "hero who does the work," appears to be satisfied to go on doing it. . . . "A man can never stand so much that there's not still more that he can bear. That's how man's spirit that raises him above the beasts flings him far beneath them. I have driven pack trains of camels, llamas, donkeys and mules. I have seen dozens of the beasts . . . let themselves be beaten to death without a murmur . . . rather than get up and carry the load . . . But Man? The lord of creation? He loves to be a slave . . . Why? Because he can think. Because he hopes things will get better. That is his curse and not his blessing."

Again and again . . . apotheosis of primitivism . . . Traven compares the superior wisdom of animals to man. In a most moving passage in *The Carreta* he compares the worker "who allows himself to be bluffed and cheated day after day, that as long as he properly racks his guts, he will rise to be a member of the Board of Directors," with the sagacity of the ox who refuses to be bribed or hurried, the cleverness of donkeys, and the superior happiness of hens who cannot miss their eggs because they cannot count. Just as his animals are superior, so are his Indians; who are indifferent to gold, and bound by traditions of mutual respect and behaviour. It is impossible for civilized man to hack a way back into elemental communion. The only hope of progress lies "sometime, far

ahead . . . when men have stopped believing in institutions and authorities."

In the meanwhile Traven like an Old Testament prophet demands that labour must pay, with suffering and sweat, for its inability to recapture the Garden of Eden. There is an almost religious inevitability about his emotional passivism, his insistence in the nothingness of man, his bitter allegorical conclusions bound up with Death and Disintegration. The sailors in *The Death Ship* live in dirt and starvation, chained in perpetual misery to each other and the sea. Yet the stories of Stanislav, Kurt, Paul and the "I" who tells them, are stories of the survival of love in man. The gallimaufry language, the "Yorrikkish" spoken, is a link between those in desperate exile. There is a solidarity of crew against officers, and a feeling of mystic kinship between derelict men and derelict ship. A man could at least die and be assured that "He who enters here shall suffer no more pain." But this humanity is only discernible after civilized society has excreted the stateless penniless crew, and written them off as less valuable than the derelict old ship, on which there is at least insurance money to be drawn.

The moral disintegration of Dobbs, in the *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, is due to his slow realization that GOLD is the open sesame to the world in which he wants to live. He accepts the worldly values, and the concept of gold as a talisman. The climacteric is sudden; mining is no longer just a job but an acceptance of a voodoo assessment. So Dobbs who is not a crook, murders in order to rob the companions with whom he has slaved. He can't believe, as Curtin, his co-miner, does, in sentimental nonsense about not depriving a man of the fruits of his sweat and labour, in a world where "only the small fry have to have a conscience." where nations indulge in mass murders and armament factories make fortunes. Dobbs is in turn, murdered on the way to his golden future. Some half-breed Indians, escaping train bandits, behead him, almost casually. They need money, but apart from his pack mules and other trifles, find only some little bags of sand, which they are not yet educated enough to recognize as gold dust, and throw away. These Mestizos, superstitious and ignorant, are themselves entangled in the monolithic web. From childhood they are fed on "figures of saints and martyrs . . . mouth gaping to show the stumps of a tongue, hearts torn out and dripping blood," gruesome religious processions. What easier than to draw on these memories of unending torture, to commit the most incredible brutalities, to chop a man's head off? The all-destroying monster reaches out even into the primeval forest. The little Carlo is drowned because the bridge in the jungle has no handrails. It wasn't worth the oil companies' money to make a decent job. He stumbled because his little feet were rigid and unaccustomed to the beautiful new patent leather shoes, symbol of civilization, that his brother had brought him from town. Progress is synonymous with Death, spiritual or physical.

The Carreta and Government tell, in carefully documented detail, the story of Indians in Mexico, existing as chattels in semi-feudalism. There is the horror of a nightmare in the story of Don Gabriel, who rises to be a labour recruiter for the mahogany forests. The debt-ridden peons have no hope against these sordid Chichikovs, the buyers, not of dead souls, but of living men. Traven relates the serfdom of these Indians to the proletariat of the rest of the world. They are slaves, too, he says, for all the blessings of Ford and tinned goods. He knows and

writes that the carretero, escaped from the finca, is still bound, that "freedom and liberty were fine words merely used to veil the hard countenance of economic conditions." Andrew, bound by the age-old ties of family, has to pay off his father's debts, has to leave his woman, because an Indian knows that "the part of a son in the matter is unalterable." "His blood tells him what he has to do." And the only way for an Indian to pay off his debts is by labour, and it is either "cheap mahogany" or "respect for the humanity of the Indian!" "Pity—yes, with joyfulness and a Christian heart, but the dollar must not be imperilled." He knows that morality is butter only for those who have bread, that no one is more stupidly sensitive about honour than the worker. He knows the difference between "their morals and ours," that faith may move mountains, but unbelief breaks the chains. He says there are not enough jobs or bread. This is the destruction wrought by the advancing Jugernaut Demon. But there is still the simple warmth, natural goodness, and innate tact of the Noble Savage. With the enthusiasm of a Le Vaillant, he embraces what is left of primitive virtue.

In the *Bridge in the Jungle*, published in 1940, there is still the remembered hatred of the State, and pale imprecations against war and mechanization, though there is less anger in this American than in the sailor doing the Burns' Tour of post-1918 Europe. Here is the final attempt to resolve the contradiction in escape. Traven's final is as pallbearer, as he "hotfoots" it to the funeral—the funeral of everything, except love "I can laugh at a thousand things and situations . . . even at the brutalities of fascism, which as I see them are but ridiculous cowardice without limits. But I can never laugh at love shown by men for those of their fellowmen in pain or sorrow."

Many men, all over the world, stunted and crippled by this "ridiculous cowardice without limits," still loved their fellowmen, and saw in fascism a denial of that love, beyond cause for laughter. They were, and are, unable to find comfort in their dissolution by comparative appeals to Nature. Traven rationalizes his impotence by measuring the littleness of man against the mighty sun, the devouring jungle, and then resigns himself to the obvious fact that it is impossible to lead the peoples of the world into a para-disaical wilderness. "Rough-fisted bolshevism," he finds out in Spain. " . . . wants to change everything. The State is to manage everything. But we won't have that. We want to work when we like, how we like, where we like, and at what we like."

The Pebvil Indians in *Government* are organized into collective communities, with planned economy and explicit division of labour. It is an age-old system, which works smoothly and well. But civilized man is both regimented and solitary. Traven has always known that the rot is all-persuasive. It is too late to wreck the machinery—to be a Luddite in the twentieth century. A Silone, whose hope was towards progress, can, disappointed, seek regeneration in the immemorial mysticism of Death, sacrifice and resurrection. Traven can only try to believe that "One lives easier, happier, more in harmony with the universe if one does not use one's brain continually about things of which the explanation and analysis cannot make us any happier, usually not even richer, if it is riches we are after. Take life as it is. Here in the jungle, perhaps all over the world, that is the whole meaning of life. What else do you want? What else do you expect? Anything else is negation of life and nonsense besides. It is the nonsense out of which grows every heartache, every grief, every evil in the world."

But then, even then, he can't quite let go. "Would that we tried once in a while to reach them (these Indians) not with puffed rice and naked celluloid dames with the wrong man in the right bed, but with the Gettysburg address, which next to God's rain would be the greatest blessing to all these so-called republics, if we would take the trouble to make the people understand the true meaning of the greatest, finest, most noble poem any American has produced to this day." The Gettysburg address; slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity! And yet it was "impossible to take the so-called right of Indians literally, or any of those phrases about comradeship and respect for humanity. In the proper conduct of business . . . there is no time for dealing with phrases and ideas of world betterment," says Traven elsewhere with bitter irony. He realizes it depends on who sells the phrases, who buys. No meaning inheres in the words at all.

This stagnant advice, this idealistic call to poetry, is the sum of Traven's personal failure, his nihilistic disorientation. His achievements as social conscience commentator and writer remain great and symptomatic.

D. LYNN.

Since this essay was written the mystery of B. Traven's identity has been unveiled. He was born in Chicago of Swedish parents 58 years ago. Since 1913 he has lived in Mexico; his full name is Benck Traven Torsvan Torsvan.

NOTES

BORIS PASTERNAK, the Soviet-Russian Symbolist Poet, who has for many years been working on translations of Shakespeare into Russian.

NIKOLAI TIKHONOV: poet and novelist of Soviet Russia. Trained in the group of the Serapion Brothers, he has written poems powerfully expressing the early revolutionary period and later poems of landscape evocation.

ENDRE ILLES, Hungarian story-writer and playwright, belonged to a group which sought to develop more subtle methods than those used by the folkwriters; his work mingles satire, irony, poetic evocation.

PAUL ELUARD, for long one of the leading figures in the Surrealist movement. Now a prominent Communist writer.

JEAN CASSOU, French critic, novelist and poet; editor of *Europe* and Director of the Musee d'Art Moderne.

TRISTAN TZARA, Rumanian by birth, founded Dada at Zurich in 1916, and since then, both by his poetry and his critical work, has been a directing force in the advanced experimental developments of Europe. Marxist for many years.

EDITH SITWELL, has, since 1945, written a series of poems defining the basic issues of the postwar world.

HUGH MACDIARMID, founder of the Scottish renaissance. His poem here is the end of *A Drunken Man Looks at the Thistle*.

ALICK WEST, Marxist critic, author of *Crisis and Criticism*, is working at a book on Shaw.

DORIAN COOKE, played active part in the Yugoslav Resistance during the war.

MALCOLM LOWRY, English writer, has lived in Canada and Mexico; now in Paris. His *Under the Volcano* had a huge success in the U.S.A. (1947).

JOHN MITCHEL, a young American novelist.

MAURICE JEAN LEFEBVE, Doctor of Philosophy at Brussels University.

D. LYNN, South-African critic.

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